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University of California
Berkeley, California

Women in Politics Oral History Project

Kimiko Fujii Kitayama

NISEI LEADER IN DEMOCRATIC POLITICS AND CIVIC AFFAIRS

With an Introduction by
Adele Levine

An Interview Conducted by
Malca Chall
in 1977

Underwritten by grants from:
National Endowment for the Humanities
Columbia Foundation
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Copy no. /



Kimiko Fujii Kitayama
1974

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PREFACE

The following interview is one of a series of tape-recorded memoirs in the California Women Political Leaders Oral History Project. The series has been designed to study the political activities of a representative group of California women who became active in politics during the years between the passage of the woman's suffrage amendment and the current feminist movement--roughly the years between 1920 and 1965. They represent a variety of views: conservative, moderate, liberal, and radical, although most of them worked within the Democratic and Republican parties. They include elected and appointed officials at national, state, and local governmental levels. For many the route to leadership was through the political party--primarily those divisions of the party reserved for women.

Regardless of the ultimate political level attained, these women have all worked in election campaigns on behalf of issues and candidates. They have raised funds, addressed envelopes, rung doorbells, watched polls, staffed offices, given speeches, planned media coverage, and when permitted, helped set policy. While they enjoyed many successes, a few also experienced defeat as candidates for public office.

Their different family and cultural backgrounds, their social attitudes, and their personalities indicate clearly that there is no typical woman political leader; their candid, first-hand observations and their insights about their experiences provide fresh source material for the social and political history of women in the past half century.

In a broader framework their memoirs provide valuable insights into the political process as a whole. The memoirists have thoughtfully discussed details of party organization and the work of the men and women who served the party. They have analysed the process of selecting party leaders and candidates, running campaigns, raising funds, and drafting party platforms, as well as the more subtle aspects of political life such as maintaining harmony and coping with fatigue, frustration, and defeat. Perceived through it all are the pleasures of friendships, struggles, and triumphs in a common cause.

The California Women Political Leaders Oral History Project has been financed by both an outright and a matching grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Matching funds were provided by the Rockefeller Foundation for the Helen Gahagan Douglas component of the project, by the Columbia and Fairtree Foundations, and by individuals who were interested in supporting memoirs of their friends and colleagues. In addition, funds from the California State Legislature-sponsored Knight-Brown Era Governmental History Project made it possible to increase the research and broaden the scope of the interviews in which there was

a meshing of the woman's political career with the topics being studied in the Knight-Brown project. Professors Judith Blake Davis, Albert Lepawsky, and Walton Bean have served as principal investigators during the period July 1975-December 1977 that the project was underway. This series is the second phase of the Women in Politics Oral History Project, the first of which dealt with the experiences of eleven women who had been leaders and rank-and-file workers in the suffrage movement.

The Regional Oral History Office was established to tape record autobiographical interviews with persons significant in the history of the West and the nation. The Office is under the administrative supervision of James D. Hart, Director of The Bancroft Library. Interviews were conducted by Amelia R. Fry, Miriam Stein, Gabrielle Morris, Malca Chall, Fern Ingersoll, and Ingrid Scobie.

Malca Chall, Project Director
Women in Politics Oral History Project

Willa Baum, Department Head
Regional Oral History Office

15 November 1979
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CALIFORNIA WOMEN POLITICAL LEADERS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

- Frances Mary Albrier, *Determined Advocate for Racial Equality*. 1979, 308 p.
- Odessa Cox, *Challenging the Status Quo: The Twenty-seven Year Campaign for Southwest Junior College*. 1979, 149 p.
- March Fong Eu, *High Achieving Nonconformist in Local and State Government*. 1977, 245 p.
- Jean Wood Fuller, *Organizing Women: Careers in Volunteer Politics and Government Administration*. 1977, 270 p.
- Elizabeth Rudel Gatov, *Grassroots Party Organizer to Treasurer of the United States*. 1978, 412 p.
- Patricia Hitt, *From Precinct Worker to Assistant Secretary of HEW*. 1980, 220 p.
- Kimiko Fujii Kitayama, *Nisei Leader in Democratic Politics and Civic Affairs*. 1979, 110 p.
- Bernice Hubbard May, *A Native Daughter's Leadership in Public Affairs*. Two volumes, 1976, 540 p.
- Hulda Hoover McLean, *A Conservative's Crusades for Good Government*. 1977, 174 p.
- Julia Porter, *Dedicated Democrat and City Planner, 1941-1975*. 1977, 195 p.
- Wanda Sankary, *From Sod House to State House*. 1979, 109 p.
- Hope Mendoza Schechter, *Activist in the Labor Movement, the Democratic Party, and the Mexican-American Community*. 1979, 165 p.
- Vera Schultz, *Ideals and Realities in State and Local Government*. 1977, 272 p.
- Clara Shirpser, *One Woman's Role in Democratic Party Politics: National, State, and Local, 1950-1973*. Two volumes, 1975, 671 p.
- Elizabeth Snyder, *California's First Woman State Party Chairman*. 1977, 199 p.
- Eleanor Wagner, *Independent Political Coalitions: Electoral, Legislative, and Community*. 1977, 166 p.
- Carolyn Wolfe, *Educating for Citizenship: A Career in Community Affairs and the Democratic Party, 1906-1976*. 1978, 254 p.
- Rosalind Wyman, *"It's a Girl:" Three Terms on the Los Angeles City Council, 1953-1965; Three Decades in the Democratic Party, 1948-1979*. 1979, 150 p.

Interviews in Process

Marjorie Benedict, Pauline Davis, Ann Eliaser, Elinor R. Heller, Lucile Hosmer, La Rue McCormick, Emily Pike, Carmen Warschaw, Mildred Younger.

The Helen Gahagan Douglas Component of the California Women Political Leaders
Oral History Project

In four volumes, in process

Volume I: *The Political Campaigns*

Discussion primarily of the 1950 Senate campaign and defeat, in interviews with Tilford E. Dudley, India T. Edwards, Leo Goodman, Kenneth R. Harding, Judge Byron F. Lindsley, Helen Lustig, William Malone, Alvin P. Meyers, and Frank Rogers.

Volume II: *The Congress Years, 1944-1950*

Discussion of organization and staffing; legislation on migrant labor, land, power and water, civilian control of atomic energy, foreign policy, the United Nations, social welfare, and economics, in interviews with Juanita E. Barbee, Rachel S. Bell, Albert S. Cahn, Margery Cahn, Evelyn Chavoor, Lucy Kramer Cohen, Arthur Goldschmidt, Elizabeth Wickenden Goldschmidt, Chester E. Holifield, Charles Hogan, Mary Keyserling, and Philip J. Noel-Baker.

Volume III: *Family, Friends, and the Theater: The Years Before and After Politics*

Discussion of Helen and Melvyn Douglas and their activities at home with their family and among friends, and their work in the theater and movies, in interviews with Fay Bennett, Walter Gahagan, Cornelia C. Palms, Walter R. Pick, and Alis DeSola.

Volume IV: *Congresswoman, Actress, and Opera Singer*

Helen Gahagan Douglas discusses her background and childhood; Barnard College education; Broadway, theater and opera years; early political organization and Democratic party work; the congressional campaigns, supporters; home and office in Washington; issues during the Congress years, 1944-50; the 1950 Senate campaign against Richard M. Nixon, and aftermath; women and independence; occupations since 1950; speaking engagements, travel to Russia, South America, Liberia inauguration, civic activities, life in Vermont.

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INTRODUCTION

Kimi Fujii was known to all of us in Southern Alameda County as "Miss Democrat." She was the one we turned to for information, for support, for clarification, for leadership--yet "leadership" was the role she identified with least. She would humbly deny the title if used.

Her leadership was a very special kind. She was an "enabler." She identified neophytes and encouraged them to assume responsibility. She reassured them of their capability so that they could grow. She was singularly responsible for the growth of 'drones' as well as 'queen bees'. I am one of these who never would have grown had it not been for Kimi Fujii.

She was respected by federal officials, by state officials and local officials. She knew the 'scene'. She was the rare human who could work with all factions--which was not an easy chore! When emotions were high and heated issues created divisiveness, she delicately acknowledged differences, understood when personalities clouded issues, recognized cliques, personal grudges and animosities as well as self-aggrandizement at work. She pacified, ameliorated, mediated as she pursued the major goal--election of Democrats and support of Democratic issues.

She maintained a purposeful dignity as she pursued each activity. No activity was too small--she would lick stamps, wash dishes, make phone calls, sell tickets--if the job needed doing, Kimi was there.

Many a time she was asked to do things that were well nigh impossible, yet she did it. When Governor Brown's wife was touring South County and we needed a special incident to insure adequate publicity as well as to honor our state's First Lady, we asked Kimi to have a new carnation named in her honor. How little did we know how involved and difficult it would be. Bernice Brown was presented with a "Bernice Brown" carnation!

My daughters will always remember Kimi for sharing her tradition with us. Each year on "Girl's Day" she would drive up with an offering of pink rice cakes. They were made to feel special and honorable because they were "girls." Kimi always made people feel special and honorable.

The "Carnation" lady of Hayward served her family, her friends and her community--County Central Committee, State Central Committee, Hayward

Democratic Club, Women's Division of State Democratic Party, delegate to National Democratic Party convention, Director of Garden Show, Director of AC Transit. She served us well.

When I think of Kimi, I think of integrity. I think of humility, I think of commitment, loyalty, gentility, responsibility. She is special and honorable.

Adele Levine
School of Education
San Jose State University

3 June 1978
Fremont, California

INTERVIEW HISTORY

For thirty years, Kimiko Fujii has been a well-known civic leader in the community of Hayward, California. Her activity in the Democratic party, her service on several important local government and private agency boards and commissions, her appointment, then election to the board of directors of the two-county Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District--the first woman to serve as a director and later as president--comprised the main reasons for wanting her to record an oral history memoir for the California Women Political Leaders Oral History Project.

The opportunity came to ask Kimi to participate in the project when the National Endowment for the Humanities offered a matching grant for a Minority Component of the project to enable the Regional Oral History Office to interview four women from minority ethnic groups who had had significant impact on their own and the broader majority communities. The Columbia and Fairtree Foundations provided matching funds.

A press release announcing Kimi's retirement from the AC Transit board and her forthcoming marriage and move to Colorado impelled fast action toward scheduling the interview. Because of my own long-term residence in the Hayward area, I knew Kimi and had respected her work in the community. I phoned and told her about the oral history project and my interest in her participation, and at once gained her approval and an appointment, despite her very crowded schedule.

The first of two long interviews began at 7:30 on a warm spring night of April 19, 1977. We sat on a couch in the living room of the small home which Kimi shared with her mother across the street from the Fujii plant nursery around which the life of the family had so long centered. The noise from the street traffic coming through the open window often nearly drowned out Kimi's soft voice.

We recorded again on April 26. Kimi, realizing that her new life in Brighton, Colorado would differ considerably from her experiences in Hayward, welcomed the opportunity to discuss her many years as a political and civic activist and its meaning to her as a woman and as a Nisei. She did so perceptively, candidly, and with good humor throughout the five hours of interviewing.

By March, 1978 she had completed the review of her lightly edited transcript and soon thereafter sent pictures and news clippings, which, copied, have been placed where appropriate in the final manuscript. Her long-time friend Adele Levine agreed to write the introduction to this unique

account of a career in business and politics. To her fortunate family and community in Brighton, Kimiko Fujii Kitayama will bring the warmth, the desire to share, and the intelligent perspective on her fellow humans which are so much a part of her character and which helped shape her life in Hayward.

Malca Chall
Interviewer-Editor

27 July 1979
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University of California at Berkeley

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY : KIMIKO FUJII KITAYAMA

1922 Born, Hayward, California

1942-1943 Resident, Internment camp, Topaz, Utah

1943-1944 Brigham Young University

1944-1947 University of Wisconsin. B.S. Botany

1947-1977 Employed in family flower nursery business, Hayward, California

1948 Joined Eighth Congressional District Women's Club

1960-1971 Member, First District Agricultural Association; appointed by Governor Edmund G. Brown, Sr.

1962-1974 Member, Democratic State Central Committee

1964 Delegate, Democratic National Convention

1964-1973 Member, Hayward Human Relations Commission

1967-1975 Member, Alameda County Commission for Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency

1973-1977 Member, Hayward Public Service Commission

1972-1977 Member, Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District; president of board, 1975-1976

1968-1977 Member, St. Rose Hospital Advisory Board, Hayward

1977 Married Ray Kitayama, moved to Brighton, Colorado

.

I FAMILY BACKGROUND AND EDUCATION

[Interview 1, April 19, 1977]
[begin tape 1, side 1]

- Chall: The first thing I'd like to ask is where you were born and you can tell me when, if you want to, but you don't have to. Some women don't like to say when they were born.
- Fujii: Most people know when I was born, anyway. I was born in Hayward, in 1922.
- Chall: As I understand it from a newspaper article, you were the fourth of six children?
- Fujii: Yes.
- Chall: Who were the others in the family, your brothers and sisters?
- Fujii: You want their names?
- Chall: Yes, and about how far apart they are in age.
- Fujii: My oldest sister is Mary. She died in 1967. Then there's my sister, Sally. Mary was born in 1913; Sally, in 1915. My brother, Kenji, in 1918. Then there's a little gap where I come in, in 1922. Then I have a sister who was born in 1924.
- Chall: What's her name?
- Fujii: Sumiko. Then there's Hanako, who was born in 1928.
- Chall: What about Mary and Sally? Did they anglicize their names?
- Fujii: Mary was named Mary because my father wanted to name her after America, and he got "Mary" out of it.
- Chall: That's pretty good.

- Fujii: And Sally has the name Katsuyo.
- Chall: So you're all girls, but one. It looks as if your mother managed to keep a few years between you all, so she could catch up with the diapers.
- Fujii: There may have been a miscarriage' along the way. There's a gap between me and my brother.
- Chall: You really are two or three years apart, then.
- Fujii: Yes.
- Chall: Were all of you born in Hayward?
- Fujii: No. We were born in the East Bay. Mary was born in Oakland; Sally was born in Oakland. Kenji, my brother, in what was formerly called Ashland, now San Leandro.

Parents: Immigration, Business, Family Life, Religion

- Chall: Since all of you were born in the East Bay, is that where your parents, or at least your father, arrived first? How did he get to this country? That was 1902 when he arrived in the United States. Was that in the San Francisco Bay Area?
- Fujii: Yes. Actually he came on a student visa to study fabric dyeing techniques. But he needed a job so he went to San Jose, to Winchester House and worked there.
- Chall: Building rooms?
- Fujii: No, he worked in the orchard. Then he was elevated, I guess. He worked in the house for a while, as a cleaning boy, then as a gardener where he became a victim of nepotism. The boss there said, "Fujii, you've got to go. My cousin is coming from Japan and he will need work." After two years there, I think he went over and worked for a farmer in Vacaville; then he went into Richmond and worked for some flower growers; and worked for flower growers in the Ashland area. He learned how to grow carnations from them. In 1906, he bought an acre of land in Oakland, which at that time, was rather unusual.
- Chall: How could he?
- Fujii: He had saved his money and there wasn't any law against buying land

Fujii: by an Asian or Japanese. That came in 1913.

Chall: That's right. And prior to that, they could own land, is that right?

Fujii: Yes, they could. My father bought that in 1906, I believe.

Chall: In Oakland. Whereabouts was that?

Fujii: It was the Havenscourt area. Do you know where that is?

Chall: Yes.

Fujii: It was right across the street from the Domoto Nursery. Domoto's had a large nursery.

Chall: In that area, too?

Fujii: My father bought this land. He built a home on it; he built a greenhouse, and a boiler house, the heating unit. Finally in 1912, my mother came; married him.

Chall: My, he'd been over here a long time, then. How old was he when he came over?

Fujii: Twenty-one.

Chall: Was your mother what I read about as a picture bride, or was she known to the family?

Fujii: She was known to his family. His mother courted her for him for two years.

Chall: That's the real old fashioned way, the matchmaker.

Fujii: It took her two years to decide if she really would come to the United States and marry my father. She went back in 1951. That's the only time she visited Japan since she came here.

Chall: And that was 1912, you said, that she came over here?

Fujii: Yes.

Chall: How old was she?

Fujii: I think she was about twenty-one also, when she came.

Chall: She was, by then, what, about twelve years or so younger than your father.

Fujii: She was eleven years younger, actually.

Chall: What is her name?

Fujii: Katsu.

Chall: In Japan, did they have maiden names?

Fujii: Yes. Yokobori.

Chall: And your father's name?

Fujii: Rutaro Fujii.

Chall: They both came, then, I guess, from the same part of Japan.

Fujii: Yes.

Chall: Which was what?

Fujii: Gunma Prefecture.

Chall: By the time your mother came over, was your father speaking English? Or was he still speaking mostly Japanese?

Fujii: He was speaking mostly Japanese. He had enough knowledge of English, so that he could conduct business at the market, sell his products, and that was sufficient for the time.

Chall: What about your mother?

Fujii: She learned English in school, in high school.

Chall: In high school in Japan?

Fujii: Yes, but she didn't use it here very much. However, she used to teach us how to read our primer, our first grade books. After that, we sort of got along by ourselves. She knew enough to teach us that much English, the first year perhaps. Those were the first year books. She could go through the grammar and so forth.

Chall: Did any of you learn to speak Japanese when you were growing up, or did you learn English only?

Fujii: We picked it up, here at home. Then we had a tutor who came by. We weren't very close to a Japanese school, so we had a tutor. He was quite a Japanese scholar. Of course, at that time, as children, we weren't impressed by that at all.

Chall: But it was expected of you, is that right, that you learn Japanese?

Fujii: That's right.

Chall: How were you tutored? At home, after school? How many days or hours a week. And for how many years?

Fujii: We were tutored at home on Saturdays for 3-4 hours for six years or so. Our tutor came by bus from Alameda.

Chall: Did your parents speak Japanese in the home?

Fujii: Oh, yes, all the time.

Chall: So you really did learn it by listening to it.

Fujii: Yes, it was adequate, but we never did learn. Unfortunately, we would come home and speak English among our siblings, so we didn't learn to speak Japanese too fluently. Right now, I just have a passing knowledge of Japanese. It's acceptable. It's colloquial, but when it gets up into a sophisticated level, I'm a little lost, unfortunately.

Chall: Did you go back to Japan with your mother in 1951?

Fujii: No. I went back in 1960. It was about seventeen years ago.

Chall: Did your father ever go back?

Fujii: He went back once, and that was in 1956.

Chall: One of the reasons I take all this down is that it's going to be nice for members of your family to know this background I think--especially your nieces and nephews. I'm sure you must have quite a few.

Fujii: Yes.

Chall: Others want this kind of information when they're studying about people; immigration patterns, and all sorts of things.

If you were born in Hayward, did your father give up his land in Oakland and buy out here?

Fujii: No. First of all, he had a nursery in partnership with another Japanese friend in Ashland.* They moved from Oakland to Ashland, the Ashland area. The partnership was dissolved and then they

* Ashland is the name of a small, still unincorporated area near Hayward, California.

- Fujii: moved here [Hayward] in 1920. This nursery was purchased under a family corporation.
- Chall: What was in the nursery? Was it carnations mainly or other plants?
- Fujii: It was cut flowers. They had carnations under glass and they grew flowers outside, like gladiolas, delphiniums, asters, just anything they thought they could sell on the market. My father was a very good salesman and loved selling.
- Chall: Would he take the flowers to the market area? Was it in San Francisco? And would he do that himself -- go there in the early morning hours?
- Fujii: Oh, yes. He would leave quite early in the morning, about three or four A.M. and drive up. When he moved to Hayward, he had a car. Then he'd drive up to, at one time, Melrose Avenue [Oakland] and take the red train into Oakland, catch the ferry boat to San Francisco and a taxi to the flower market -- lugging his flowers in flower baskets. Later took his car to San Francisco boarding the auto ferries.
- Chall: What a trip!
- Fujii: Before that, I know he took a street car. In Oakland, my mother said, he would roll his flowers in a wheelbarrow to the street car line on East Fourteenth Street and then he'd go up to Melrose and catch the red train to the Oakland depot and catch the ferry going to San Francisco. She would walk with him to the street car line and walk back with the empty wheelbarrow -- about one mile on an unpaved road.
- Chall: That was a long day.
- Fujii: Oh, yes. It was the only way you could handle it. There were others doing it, too. I rather think they enjoyed it after a while.
- Chall: Maybe that was one of the social parts of the day, too -- all the men getting together. Now who would be handling the work in the nursery if he was going to be gone a good share of the day on these long trips?
- Fujii: My mother did most of the work, or supervised it. She worked very hard.
- Chall: She worked right along with him, then, all those years?
- Fujii: All the time. They would have perhaps one person who was steady. They they would hire people seasonally. There seemed to be adequate

Fujii: help, but they did work very, very hard. My mother worked very hard. In Oakland she even stoked the boiler by shoveling coal -- to keep the greenhouse temperature up.

Chall: Was this seasonal help, Japanese too?

Fujii: Generally Japanese. Or Filipino or Portuguese.

Chall: Of course I don't know much about the nursery, so it wouldn't do me any good to ask how big it was. In terms of a big nursery was it comparable to, let's say Domoto? I guess he had one of the biggest.

Fujii: You mean, initially, when he went into Oakland?

Chall: Yes.

Fujii: Oh, no. His nursery was only one acre and I think the Domoto's might have been twenty or thirty acres; maybe fifty acres. They were quite large.

Chall: I see. That's quite different. And in Hayward?

Fujii: Well he bought three and a half acres at the time. Now, we're about five and a half acres.

Chall: It's all under glass. It's that type of nursery?

Fujii: Yes.

Chall: The first piece of property that your father bought was in Oakland. We agreed that he could own it because he bought it before 1913. Then when he bought this piece of property, it was I believe in 1920, wasn't it?

Fujii: Yes.

Chall: Now, was he able to buy that?

Fujii: No. A family corporation was set up. My mother was a stockholder; he was a stockholder; and then they had a friend who helped them at that time. The children were all minors. Then, in a short while, my parents and the children became the sole owners. You had to have officers, I guess. I don't know why this man was brought into the picture.

Chall: He was a Caucasian?

Fujii: No, he was a Japanese.

Chall: That's interesting. They couldn't own land, but the corporation could own it, is that it?

Fujii: Yes.

Chall: My! [laughs]

Fujii: The children were citizens, too.

Chall: That's right. But they were minors.

Fujii: Some people bought property in the name of some other kid, who was a citizen and of age. That was not such a wise thing to do. There were times when they lost the property because the individual wasn't trustworthy. That was very sad.

Chall: That's interesting. It's the first time I've ever heard about this. There was a terrific lawyer, Guy C. Calden in Oakland who helped

Fujii: set up the family corporations to enable the Japanese to own land. The Japanese were not allowed to become U.S. citizens nor to buy land as individuals.

Chall: Where does your brother live? Does he have the first family home on the property?

Fujii: On this property?

Chall: Yes. I mean, does he live on your land, nursery?

Fujii: No, he has his own property. It's adjacent to the nursery. On the next street. He and his wife live on it presently.

Chall: How did your parents manage with six children and with your mother working all day the way she did? I assume the house was close to the nursery.

Fujii: Yes. We always lived on the nursery grounds. My mother would come in and prepare our lunch for us. We came home for lunch from school. My oldest sister assumed a lot of the responsibility of raising us and taking care of the household and so forth. After she left for college (U.C. Berkeley) we all sort of took our turns.

Chall: Yes. There are fifteen years between Mary and the sixth child, so there's always someone old enough to help take care of siblings. What kind of background did your parents have? How much education had they had?

Fujii: As far as I know, my father went through what would be grammar school. Then he went on to night school when he went into Tokyo. He was terribly interested in history and literature. He read a lot.

- Fujii: My mother completed her high school education at a private school for girls. She was a teacher before she came to the United States. I don't know whether she went to teacher's college or normal school, but I think if you had a high school education, you were qualified to teach then.
- Chall: Wasn't that an unusual thing for a Japanese girl?
- Fujii: To teach?
- Chall: To go that far in school.
- Fujii: At that time, I think it wasn't unusual. But you have to give credit to those who went on, because I know my mother's contemporaries over here went to high school, but they went to a government school. My mother went to a private school. There was a little difference. Those who went to the government school were obligated to teach for two years after graduation from high school.
- Chall: Does that mean her parents had some means?
- Fujii: She was in an unfortunate situation. Her mother and father died when she was about twelve, and so, her brother, now the head of the household inheriting the family's vast holdings (land), having only one sister in the house and the baby at that, thought it best that she go to a boarding school, in town. So she went there. It was actually owned and operated by Japanese, but there were American Congregational missionaries who came in to teach, so it wasn't a missionary school. They taught her the English that she knows.
- Chall: That's it. I see.
- Fujii: I can't imagine her learning English from a Japanese because our rs and ls and everything are all so mixed up.
- Chall: Did that mean that she became a Christian or was a Christian when she came over here?
- Fujii: She became a Christian. She had been Buddhist.
- Chall: Was your father a Christian or did he convert?
- Fujii: I think he was a Buddhist. In the course of time, he became a Seventh Day Adventist, and my mother did also. In fact she became the convert first. Then about ten years later my father did.
- Chall: Did they follow it closely?
- Fujii: No, not that closely, but it's a religion that they find comfortable.

- Fujii: I think it was good for both of them to have it. Of course, my mother's still living. But they needed a something besides work to sustain them. They enjoyed Bible study and the friendship of the congregation. My father became quite blind and I think he memorized a great portion of the Bible over the years.
- Chall: Did they observe the Saturday sabbath?
- Fujii: They did, but we didn't.
- Chall: What an interesting household, here.
- Fujii: I appreciate the fact that they didn't require us to.
- Chall: They didn't. Of none of you?
- Fujii: No. However I'm sure they hoped we would some day.
- Chall: Did they become vegetarians?
- Fujii: To a point, but to them that discipline wasn't important.
- Chall: What did they do about your religion as you were growing up?
- Fujii: I don't know about my older sister so much, but I know from my brother on down, we were in Hayward, and we would go to the Methodist church in town. It's still there on A Street. Later on, we went to the Seventh Day Adventist church for awhile, but it wasn't for any length of time. My father also enjoyed Buddhist philosophy. Most of his friends were Buddhists and we observed Buddhist celebrations also. We've always appreciated the exposure.
- Chall: What about your education, all of you? Did you go right through the schools at Hayward? What were they at the time? What was your elementary school?
- Fujii: I went to the John Muir School. Then I went to Bret Harte School, for my seventh and eighth grades. Then I went to Hayward High School.
- Chall: How many Japanese families were in Hayward about then? For example, how many classmates would you have at any time who were also Japanese?
- Fujii: In high school my classmates I guess I must have had about fifteen, but we weren't ever in the same classes at the same time, for our courses, that is. I think there were more in my class than in the other classes, just because of our age group and that of our parents.
- Chall: Were the families all in nursery business?

Fujii: No. In Hayward, I think we were one of two families -- two or four families -- in the nursery business. The rest were living in the Mt. Eden area.* There were sharecroppers. Vegetable crops. Truck crops.

Chall: Share cropping meant?

Fujii: I don't know what the actual percentage was; it might have been 40/60.

Chall: Were the owners of the land Caucasian?

Fujii: Yes. I don't know how well they did, but they did quite well. Actually, when I think about it, there were more than four nursery families in the area. Probably about ten or so.

Chall: In the Hayward area. Does that include San Leandro?

Fujii: No. I'm including Mt. Eden, and Castro Valley, Hayward, and Ashland.

Chall: Can you remember the names of any of them?

Fujii: Oh, yes. There's Shibata.

Chall: Yes, they're still here, aren't they?

Fujii: Yes. Then the Yoshioka's are still here.

Chall: Where is their nursery?

Fujii: Right next door. They were here before my parents were. Then there's Okada and they're still there in Ashland. The ones in Ashland I'll mention - Tanisawa. There's Nieda. There's the Kuramoto and Mori families.

Chall: Is that any relation to [S. Floyd] Mori, who's the assemblyman now?

Fujii: No. This man, Toshio, the son of the founder, is an author, also. Then there's Tanabe. There's Minami, And Hatakeda. Another one in Ashland is Nomura. In Castro Valley, there's Yonekura. I think that's just about it. Off the top of my head.

Chall: That's pretty good. That's quite a list. So most of the Japanese here were in some form of agriculture.

Fujii: Yes. There was also a shoe cobbler whose name I never did know and

* An area now part of Hayward.

- Fujii: also an owner of a gift shop in Hayward named Kuniyuki.
- Chall: Did any members of your father's family or your mother's come over?
- Fujii: My father's sister. She lived in Tokyo for a while and then she married and came to the United States. They lived in Sacramento, and had one son. We didn't have too much contact with them. Her husband died before World War II and she died in Brooklyn, New York right after the war.
- Chall: Had your father left a large family behind him?
- Fujii: No. He left two sisters and his mother, stepfather, and relatives, of course.
- Chall: Your mother had only the one brother?
- Fujii: No. She had five brothers.
- Chall: She was the only girl.
- Fujii: And the last.

Educational Expectations

- Chall: Did your parents have any expectations for all of you with respect to your getting an education? Did they expect you to do well? Get good grades? Become Americanized?
- Fujii: We were expected to do our best. It wasn't necessarily a matter of being the top of our class, but to do our best. We'd be rewarded for good report cards. We'd get maybe five dollars to put into our bank. We couldn't spend it, though. That was not meant to be spent. [Laughter] But that was about the only reward we ever received, that I can recall. There didn't seem to be terrific expectations, other than that. Just to get the most we could out of our education.
- Chall: Was there any different kind of expectation for Kenji and the rest of you who were girls?
- Fujii: He was expected to carry on the nursery, which is traditional in a Japanese family, being the only son. As a consequence, it's probably the reason why he didn't go on to college and the rest of us did.
- Chall: All of you girls did?

Fujii: Yes.

Chall: But he didn't?

Fujii: No.

Chall: He went right into the business. Do you think he wanted to go to college?

Fujii: He would have liked to, but he graduated from high school in 1936, and that was still the height of the Depression. My parents needed him at home. In fact, my sister Sally stayed home two years after she completed her high school education, just to work at home. Then she went on to UC Berkeley.

Chall: What did she study?

Fujii: She was in decorative arts.

Chall: And Mary?

Fujii: Mary studied anthropology.

Chall: And you were what?

Fujii: Botany and art history.

Chall: And Sumiko?

Fujii: Political science, I think.

Chall: And Hanako?

Fujii: She had a general education, perhaps leaning toward political science.

Chall: The last two, Sumiko and Hanako, could have gone to college in this area, after the war.

Fujii: Sumiko finished at Bennington College. She was there in '44. Hanako finished UC Berkeley.

Chall: You girls did well, all of you. College degrees.

Fujii: I think our oldest sister set the pattern.

Coping with Racial Prejudice

Chall: Now what about the area at the time? Was there much prejudice against the Japanese? I don't know how many Chinese were in the area, if any, at that time.

Fujii: There wasn't any prejudice, per se, but it was a subtle thing. You could feel it in the schools, as we used to go through school. I didn't feel it so much in the grade school, but when I went into high school, I started to sense it.

You're not always included in parties. Of course, you're expected to do a little more than the other person. So, it fits your pattern too, and perhaps that's why I've always worked hard on committees around here in Hayward.

Chall: The expectation was from whom?

Fujii: I think first of all, from the teachers. I really do.

Chall: Why did they expect it? Did they expect it of all their students or did they expect it of you? Either you, or of Japanese students?

Fujii: Perhaps the Japanese students. They expected them to excel. They did, actually study very hard and they worked very hard.

Chall: It was part of a stereotype?

Fujii: Yes. They were good students. Never got in trouble. Conscientious. Industrious.

Chall: As somebody pointed out, if they hadn't been Japanese, they'd have been considered perfect examples of the great American puritan ethic. Because they were Japanese, it was bad.

Had you been prepared for this treatment? After all, you were all marching through school every few years, probably having some of the same teachers. Did your older sisters prepare you for the fact that there might be some subtle forms of prejudice?

Fujii: I think we were all brought up to be aware of this. My father went to the flower market and was exposed to a lot of treatment. He was called a Jap and had stones thrown at him. He couldn't borrow money from the banks so had to borrow from private lenders.

[end tape 1, side 1, begin tape 1, side 2]

Chall: You were explaining that prejudice was something you all learned to know was around you.

Fujii: Oh, yes.

Chall: What about the newspapers? The Hearst papers, and some of those publications that dealt rather strongly in prejudice. Were you aware of that as you were growing up?

Fujii: I wasn't aware of it, but my older sisters were aware of it. They would tell us about these matters -- the Hearsts didn't like the Japanese. Then, of course, my mother would tell us about the great Hiram Johnson who signed the bill saying that Japanese could not buy any property.

Chall: Yes, I see. That was what, 1913? The Alien Land Law. And in 1922, the United States Supreme Court held that Japanese aliens could not be naturalized. Was your father naturalized before that?

Fujii: No.

Chall: So neither one of your parents was naturalized.

Fujii: Not until 1952.

Chall: 1952. The McCarran-Walter Act would have allowed that.

Fujii: I think it was in '52 that they became citizens.

Holiday Celebrations: Family and Community Life

Chall: Did that grate on them at all? The inability to be American citizens? To become a part of America?

Fujii: They felt very much a part of America through their children, at any rate. My father loved festivities. He loved holidays. So we always observed Christmas, of course, and Valentine Day. He'd always bring home the valentines. Easter we always had things for Easter around the place. Fourth of July, we always had our American flag flying in front of the house and firecrackers. Even Halloween. We'd get a Halloween cake, of course. [Laughter] Then we also observed the Japanese holidays. It was a very fulfilling youth.

Chall: What were the Japanese holidays?

Fujii: First, we would observe Girls' Day.

Chall: Girls' Day?

Fujii: March the third. Then Boys' Day on May fifth. I don't know when the Emperor's birthday is; I think it's today. I can't remember. I was supposed to have been born on a special Japanese holiday, February eleventh. That's why I was named Kimiko.

Chall: What does Kimiko mean?

Fujii: There's no meaning for it. It's just like calling Mary after America.

Chall: I see. Kimiko was the name of the holiday?

Fujii: It was Kigensetsu. The Japanese characters used in my name are taken from Kigensetsu. They once said it was the independence day of Japan, but I don't quite understand that. I really should read a little history on that and find out what the holiday actually is. Then we also observed, for instance, the Buddhist holidays, too, in our household. We were all messed up. It was fun. I'm glad we had it. My mother made special cakes in the summer for the obon celebration, especially. Or during the winter equinox. In March, the first day of spring.

Chall: March 21.

Fujii: March 21. Then in September, we'd have special cakes that she'd make. So there was a lot of celebration around here.

Chall: Almost one a month. Did your mother cook Japanese fashion?

Fujii: Yes. She can't cook anything other than meatballs. And she'll make pretty good spaghetti, and some stew, and fixes good omelets with leftovers. But that's just about it.

Chall: You really have learned to eat Japanese food.

Fujii: I have it every day. [Laughter]

Chall: Your mother was never truly Americanized in the kitchen.

Fujii: I really don't think she cares to cook, but she can whip up things in a hurry. She could barely cook when she married my father. I don't know what she expected when she came here. She couldn't cook rice or anything.

Chall: Maybe they hadn't taught her the "right" things for a young girl in school. She didn't know that she was going to be working all day in a nursery, either, did she?

- Fujii: I rather suspect she didn't. In her home in Japan there was a lot of help around to tend to the menial chores. Her family had a large homestead.
- Chall: She had to learn one task or the other. And with children coming along every two years, I guess she didn't have a great deal of time. [Laughter] What papers did your parents read?
- Fujii: They read the Japanese newspapers. The Hokubei Mainichi and the Nichi Bei Times.
- Chall: They were published in San Francisco?
- Fujii: In San Francisco, yes. They're still being published. And that was their source of news. They didn't subscribe to any Japanese newspaper from Japan.
- Chall: They really cut their ties with Japan when they left. Was there any desire at all to go back? Did they yearn to go back?
- Fujii: I wouldn't say that they yearned to go, but they had planned to go back. When the Panama Exposition was here [1915], my father told my mother, "We're really going to make it. We'll sell our property and go back to Japan." But there was a severe depression then and things just didn't work out. And as the kids got older, they just lost any interest in going back to Japan.
- Chall: Were they thinking of going back to live there?
- Fujii: To live. At that time. Then my father got very sick with the flu, that flu back in 1917 or '18. So they just decided they were going to stay here. There wasn't any more thought of going back to Japan.
- Chall: Were they, aside from celebrating the holidays, and things of this kind, were they ever interested in other activities that were going around in the community? If they couldn't vote, I guess civic affairs, as such, were probably not of great interest to them. But were there any civic and cultural interests in the family?
- Fujii: My father belonged to the Nihonjinkai. It was a Japanese organization in this area. Most of the families belonged to it. The women would have their little units. They weren't exactly associated with the group, but they would have cooking lessons and get together about every month or so. Then, my father was active in the market association -- the Japanese flower market association. There was enough to keep them busy. He was always going to market; he wasn't home all the time.
- Chall: No, there really wasn't a great deal of time.

Fujii: The annual picnics they'd have to plan for. There was always something going on.

Chall: So their contacts were primarily with Japanese. The Japanese community.

Fujii: Yes.

Chall: What about all the children of these families? Was there a junior group? What did they do in terms of the Japanese community?

Fujii: The children? The JACL [Japanese-American Citizens League] started a unit here in Eden Township. That was about 1935, probably.

Chall: Did you all join?

Fujii: Yes. When we became of age which was about eighteen. That was one way of meeting other Japanese people, too. Either if we were farming, or if we were in the nursery business -- there wasn't a lot of contact unless you went to Japanese school, where you met other students; or if you took Kendo lessons, which was martial arts. I guess some of the young ladies took some lessons in the tea ceremony or flower arranging. We weren't part of that particular group. Otherwise, you were isolated. There was then no way of getting out. No buses, no nothing.

Chall: That's right. Hayward was really out in the country at that time. Was there any communication, on special occasions, with the Japanese community in San Francisco? Or wasn't it a big one?

Fujii: My father attended some of the events that the consular officials would have. Other than that, I don't know that there was that much contact with the people in San Francisco.

Intermarriage

Chall: Did your sisters and your brother marry Japanese?

Fujii: My oldest sister married a Jewish classmate. He was a graduate student that she met at the University of California. They couldn't have married in California. The time was back in 1940, so they both went on to Chicago to do graduate work and were married there.

My brother is married to a girl who's half Japanese. My younger sister, Sumiko, is married to a Jewish person whom she met in Chicago. She was there for a time -- I think she was going to summer school at

- Fujii: the University of Chicago. She was a student at Bennington. My sister, Sally, married a Japanese. She married Kaneji Domoto. He is Toichi Domoto's youngest brother. Toichi is a well-known nurseryman in this area. His father and uncles were pioneer nurserymen in the Bay Area having settled around 1865 or so. I'll be marrying a Japanese in July.
- Chall: And Hanakq?
- Fujii: She isn't married.
- Chall: How did your parents feel about this intermarriage?
- Fujii: Well, it's something that they hadn't planned for. [Laughter] It was quite upsetting.
- Chall: I'm sure the Jewish families hadn't planned on it, either. [Laughter]
- Fujii: I don't think so. I think Abraham Halpern, my oldest sister's husband's family, were quite upset, also, because they're terribly orthodox Jews in Boston. So, I take it it was terribly unsettling. I remember, however -- I was in college at that time -- my parents were so terribly upset about it. We'd try to say, "Well, there are the rest of us," and, "I'm sure his family is not happy, either," but that wasn't enough to console them. But they got to know him.
- He's a brilliant linguist. He's also an anthropologist. While he was a student at the University of California, he would visit and have dinner at our place. My mother assumed he was just a friend. Well, it developed into more than friendship. That she didn't really like, but, you know, they must have had a dream, that all their children marry Japanese someday and be comfortably settled.
- Chall: Close by.
- Fujii: Close by, of course. It was very shattering. You can understand it. However, at the time, I think they probably thought more of what the community thought of them as parents, more so than what my sister was feeling. However, my sister was in Chicago, so she didn't have to hear all this.
- Chall: This was Mary.
- Fujii: Yes.
- Chall: When you say they were concerned about what the community thought of them as parents, you're talking about the Japanese community. Intermarriage, just wasn't accepted?

- Fujii: No. It wasn't even accepted among the Caucasian community. But my sister was a very dynamic person, and personable, and she had lots of friends in Hayward. I'm sure they would have accepted Abe as my sister's husband readily. It was my parents who just couldn't face up to it. It took them awhile.
- Chall: Did they get used to it, as the rest of you tried the same thing?
- Fujii: Yes.
- Chall: It's always a problem, intermarriage, and I suppose one tries to protect one's family.
- Fujii: But I think they were well suited. Mary and Abe had a very happy life together. In fact, he learned Japanese from my sister. During World War II, he became an instructor in Japanese to the armed forces.
- Chall: He knew it that well?
- Fujii: Then he was among the first to go to Japan with the occupation forces. I don't know what his job was; however, he was sent there because of his knowledge of Japanese, I remember. Of course, he visited my mother's family, and could converse with them at a higher level than we, and it was quite impressive I guess. It pleased my parents that Abe was appreciated and accepted.
- Chall: Did they live in Chicago, then? Is that where they settled?
- Fujii: They settled there for awhile, through World War II, and then they went to Japan during the occupation. I don't know the years exactly when they came back. They lived in Santa Monica for ten years. He was with Rand Corporation. Then he was in Japan again. I don't know what his job was, but he had a stint in Japan. Then they lived in New York City for a while, and back to Japan again.
- Chall: The Japanese culture's really been part of their lives.
- Fujii: Very much, very much.
- Chall: Wherever the others who've intermarried have lived they've had no problems with the community? By this time, intermarriages are accepted?
- Fujii: I know when Abe and Mary moved to Santa Monica, they had a hard time buying a house. It would have been all right for him to buy a house, but the fact that he had a Japanese-American wife made it very difficult. They finally found an owner who wanted to sell his house. I think he really wanted to sell it to them more because he was so indignant about this attitude of people not welcoming an Oriental

Fujii: in the community. They lived near the beach in Santa Monica, in a very nice neighborhood. But I know their children were subject to a certain amount of prejudice. Perhaps they were the only Oriental children in the school. I'm not aware. My sister, Susie, settled in Washington, D.C. with her husband Albert Biderman. There isn't that much prejudice there. So, they've had no difficulty. He is with the Bureau of Social Science Research -- a private agency.

Chall: Was intermarriage something that you wouldn't have contemplated?

Fujii: I? For my sisters, you mean?

Chall: No, for yourself.

Fujii: At one time, I thought intermarriage would be all right, if I found somebody suitable. But as you get older, as I've gotten, I find culture plays a very important part in my life. For me, I think I would be more comfortable with a Japanese marriage partner. I've been fortunate that this friend came back into my life.

Chall: Then it was somebody that you had known in the past?

Fujii: Yes. I'd known him. I think I met him after I got back here, in 1947. Of course subsequently he married; his wife died last year. Then I met him quite accidentally, and so things developed, very nicely.

Chall: Sounds fine. Is he in the nursery business?

Fujii: Yes, he is.

Chall: So you're just going to move your talents and your knowledge to a different location, then?

Fujii: Yes.

Chall: Will you be working with him, do you think?

Fujii: At the moment, I don't think I will be. He managed to do very well without me for the last twenty-five years. [Laughter]

Chall: [Laughter] He may not know what you can bring to this union. Unless you run for the assembly, immediately.

Fujii: I don't think so. He's a Republican, and that may cause some difficulty -- I hope not. [Laughter]

World War II and the Internment Experience

Chall: When the war broke out, December, 1941, you were about nineteen. Had you started college?

Fujii: Yes, I started the University of California.

Chall: You were a freshman?

Fujii: Freshman. Yes.

Chall: Can you give me some of your feelings about what happened at the time, when you were interned, and how it happened that you were sent to Topaz [Utah], rather than somewhere else? Or is that where northern California Japanese went?

Fujii: The East Bay Japanese went there.

Chall: To Topaz.

Fujii: I think from San Francisco, a large contingent, went there.

Chall: Was this a shocking, uprooting experience?

Fujii: Terribly so. Somehow, I think, we Japanese are taught to accept things. Perhaps this is what our parents were brought up to do, too. The feudalistic philosophy was still very much alive there. I think perhaps that was one reason why we just went. However, we did feel we would come back. All of us thought we'd come back. There was no question about it, in our minds.

Chall: You said in the article in the newspaper that you were bitter about it at that time and still look back on it with a certain amount of bitterness. Was there bitterness mixed with fear at that time? It's one thing to go along, but what else were you feeling?

Fujii: There was fear. Because we heard about families being attacked by vigilantes, farm families in the Fresno area. It was very frightening. Then we had the martial law imposed on us. We weren't supposed to go outside of a certain distance. We had to get special permission. I used to drive my father to the market to sell his flowers in San Francisco. We had to get special permission to drive into the area. It was really a very frightening thing.

People were looking at you. Are you Japanese or Chinese? The Chinese were wearing big buttons saying they were Chinese. I didn't think it was for self protection so much, that I went to the camps, but perhaps it was protecting all of us, in a way. It was a horrible

Fujii: feeling to go, even to have some of your friends, whom you thought were your friends in high school, going down, you know, making sandwiches that we could eat on the bus that took us to Tanforan. Somehow, that just turned my stomach.

Chall: You didn't think they were doing it as a gesture of kindness?

Fujii: No, I didn't. At that time, I was too darned mad. [Laughs]

Chall: Yes. You had to be taken out of school.

Fujii: Yes. And we had to give up everything. Well, we had our place leased out, but we had to just leave. It was something we had never thought about, that would happen to us, American citizens and our families.

Chall: Your brother was already married at the time?

Fujii: No, he wasn't.

Chall: None of you were married except Mary?

Fujii: Sally was married.

Chall: Sally. I see. Did you lease the nursery in a way that made your father at least feel sure that he was going to get this property back?

Fujii: Yes. We did it through a lawyer, who handled it quite well for us. The person didn't make any money for us, but he just kept the place going. There was a terrible windstorm at one time, and some of the greenhouses were partially demolished. They were just left that way. When we came back, my brother fixed them. At least the place was here and the person who had the mortgage on our place was very kind, so we were among the fortunate ones, I would say.

Chall: What about all the other families in the Hayward area? Was there less prejudice here, for example, in the Hayward area, than there was in Fresno, or Los Angeles, the areas where it was most focused.

Fujii: I think the prejudice developed strongly with -- it was an economic thing, in the farm areas, especially in the Valley. Japanese farmers worked so hard and were resented by the Italians, and the other farmers, the white Caucasian farmers. I don't know that they made any more money but they did work like heck. I really attribute this to the economic pressure. I think the California Farmers -- I can't think of the name of the organization-- they were very strong for evacuation, too. There was nothing we could do. Most of the Japanese were still quite young.

Chall: Yes, yes. Two thirds of them were, I think under eighteen, or something of this kind. I think I read just the other day that more than that were under the age of thirty. Also, I suppose, many of them were concerned about the fact that their parents were not citizens, and they wanted to protect them.

Fujii: The family unit had been very strong until that time. It broke down a little bit in camps because the younger kids were running around and being very independent. So the family unit that we always considered as very strong, slowly disintegrated. That was the beginning, there.

Chall: That was with the real young ones. The ones your age, eventually many of them went out and into college.

Fujii: Yes.

Chall: How did you handle that? Financially, how was that handled?

Fujii: In our particular camp Topaz, Utah, the American Friends Service Committee came to our rescue. They were tremendous. They would contact colleges for us. First of all, they'd send us a bunch of brochures about the colleges. We would select the colleges we thought we'd like to go to. Then they would investigate to see if we could be admitted, and if there were available funds.

You see, my sister, Sumiko, went on to Bennington College from camp. It was a very expensive college. She received a scholarship. And then the Friends helped her, too. She managed that way -- she got through school. As for myself, I first thought I didn't want to go too far from camp, and I couldn't get into the University of Utah. They weren't admitting Japanese, at the time. So, I went to Brigham Young University. I stayed there for a year. Then I applied to the University of Wisconsin, through the Friends again, and they got me admitted. I needed a little bit of help there financially. Right now, it seems so miniscule, but I think I had a \$150 out-of-state fee to pay. [Laughter]

Chall: But your parents really had no income. They had no money, so they couldn't afford any longer to send their children on, and yet many did go out and into college at the time, all through the Midwest and East. I always wondered how they managed it.

Fujii: Well many were excellent students. And they worked, too. They worked for their room and board. You worked for your room and board, or you worked for your meals, like I did, at the University of Wisconsin. I worked for my room and board at Brigham Young University.

Chall: In dormitories?

Fujii: No. I was what was called a school girl. You live-in in a house and do housework, cook, and so forth. That worked out all right.

Chall: You did that in Wisconsin, too?

Fujii: No, in Wisconsin I worked at the faculty club, as a kitchen helper. I got my meals there. My brother sent me some money too, which was very helpful.

Chall: How did he get it?

Fujii: Oh, he was working. He left camp and he went to Mount Clemens, Michigan and worked for a rose grower for awhile. Then, I think, he became a painter. He had an income, thank goodness. He sent me a monthly allowance. My sister helped us a little bit, too.

Chall: That was Mary.

Fujii: Mary helped.

Chall: So that means that Mary, of course, was out because she'd already been living in Chicago. Sumiko was at Bennington. Where was Sally?

Fujii: Sally was married. She and her family went to Amache, Colorado (a relocation center). They were relocated with his relatives, her husband's relatives. Then they went on to New Rochelle, New York to live. He's a landscape architect, and an architect. They're still living in New Rochelle.

Chall: And Hanako?

Fujii: After she graduated from the University of California, then she went to New York.

Chall: What does she do in New York?

Fujii: Hanako worked for the Small Business Bureau. She moved to Philadelphia when the office was moved there. Then she worked for the Social Security office in Philadelphia, then was transferred to Washington, D.C. She's a Public Information Specialist with the Social Security office now.

Chall: She was younger than you, so what was she doing during that camp period?

Fujii: She finished her schooling in camp. Through high school.

- Chall: She was the only one left in camp, really, with your parents. It must have been very hard for them to have you all, all over the country.
- Fujii: Everybody was doing it. The camp gossip, or camp talk, as you know: "My child," here, or "My child," there. It made it very easy because there were others leaving camp, too. Otherwise, I don't think I would have been able to get away.
- Chall: Did you feel that close to your parents, so that you didn't want to?
- Fujii: My father wasn't too well. My mother was fine. But you're attached to your parents, at least I was quite attached to mine. I didn't want to get too far away, so my first step was to go to Brigham Young in Provo, Utah. It took a little courage for me, I thought, [laughs] to leave and to go on to the University of Wisconsin. But I just wanted to go.
- [end tape 1, side 2, begin tape 2, side 1]

The University of Wisconsin

- Chall: How was the reception of Japanese, as you saw it, in Wisconsin, when you got there?
- Fujii: There was Truax Air Base there. I had to get clearance to get there, in the first place, besides being accepted by the university. We were accepted as students. However, sometimes you felt as though you were an oddity. I remember applying for a job at the School of Agriculture. I was talking to the assistant dean. He said, "Oh, you speak English, and you speak very well." [Laughter] I don't know what he expected.

It wasn't too easy to find work there, partly, I think, because we were Japanese. I worked over at Oscar Mayer's Meat Company for about a month. I had to get clearance, of course. The only reason I quit was because of the hours; not because they didn't want me there. I was frightened to work there because everybody was talking about those Japs that we have to beat in this war. So I just worked there quietly for two weeks packing bacon for the armed forces. They all thought I was Chinese. Finally, I said, "I'm Japanese," and they were saying, "Oh, you're kidding. You couldn't be Japanese." People had no conception of what a Japanese looks like, acts like. [Laughter]

- Chall: Well, that's right. You see, they didn't know Japanese at all. If they knew anything, it was what they'd read in the paper; absolute ignorance. Nothing.
- Fujii: One of my friends went to Carlton College in one of the midwestern states. The whole town came out to see what a Japanese looks like when she arrived at the railroad station. Really.
- Chall: Were there many of you at the University of Wisconsin so that you could at least feel not too isolated?
- Fujii: There must have been about forty or fifty.
- Chall: So then you had your own circle. You could feel protected by numbers.
- Fujii: We had monthly get-togethers. It was very comforting, actually. None of us had a place to go home on weekends. We did get together. It was a nice, warm, friendly feeling established then. A sort of protective society, as you mentioned. We didn't see each other between classes, too often. It was a healthy situation for us actually, because it was quite a large university.
- Chall: Yes, it was. It was considered quite a good one, too. At least you were getting a good education.
- Fujii: Yes. The professors were very fine. I'm pleased that I went there.
- Chall: You were there from...
- Fujii: I went '44 to '47.

Return to Hayward, California: Beginning Civic Activities

- Chall: What happened at the end of the war, when your parents came back? You decided to stay in Wisconsin, then.
- Fujii: I finished. I came home one summer in 1946 and then I went back to finish up. After I got my degree, my parents asked me to come home and help. They needed a hand here, and I just stayed.
- Chall: You majored in botany, so that gave you some start?
- Fujii: Oh, yes.
- Chall: What would you have done if you hadn't been asked to come back? Had you any plans?

- Fujii: No. It was suggested by my counselor -- she was a woman, in botany -- Dr. Fisk. She was a marvellous person but she just said, "You know, there's really no place for women in botany. I suggest that you get a teaching certificate or go into library school." I imagine it was a struggle for her. I don't think she became a full professor, associate was the highest she ever achieved. She was certainly well qualified to become a full professor. Of course, I didn't follow her career after I left.
- Chall: I see. So she was really warning you a bit. Were there other women graduating in the field of botany?
- Fujii: Oh, yes, quite a few. They were doing lab work and were thinking of going on and getting a master's or Ph.D. There's a lot of research that can be done. I hadn't planned on going into research, though. I considered at that time getting a librarian's degree or certificate -- whatever it was at that time, but I came home. I was working part time at the biology library and the librarian was very helpful. She suggested that I go into the field and that I could work there part time. It would have been a neat situation, but I
- Chall: I see, but you came back. Was that difficult at first, returning to the family?
- Fujii: No. I grew up in the nursery, and it's just part of life. Just work again, digging in the dirt again, working with your hands. The only difficult part of coming home was that there was just nobody I knew and that I could pal around with. Most of the people were married or they just weren't here, so I had to find an outlet.
- Chall: That's what I was really thinking about. It was quite a change.
- Fujii: It was quite confining. So, the Democratic party rescued me.
- Chall: That was 1947, when you came back?
- Fujii: I came back, but my activities began in 1948. I first became active in the California Council for Civic Unity. They were interested primarily in getting housing for the Japanese who had come back to California.
- Chall: They were still, in 1948, still some of them coming back?
- Fujii: Some people were here but they had no place to go. There's Eden Community Center in Ashland, now. That was formerly a Japanese school. What they did was to partition those rooms off, and I don't know how many families were living there. First of all, funds were very short, so the kids were working. Then the income increased,

- Fujii: of course. They couldn't buy any homes. Even in Hayward, the only place you could buy a home, after a while, was south of Tennyson [Road]. You'll find a whole group of Japanese living there. There's a pocket there, and the real estate agents were not cooperative.
- Chall: Prior to that time, all of these families had had homes. Of course, many of the young people had grown up, I suppose, and started their own families. But everybody had gone from having some kind of shelter here. What had happened to the homes? Had they been rented and they couldn't get them back, or what?
- Fujii: The people who share cropped had no homes to come back to.
- Chall: I see.
- Fujii: We were lucky. My parents, when they came back, had to stay in the hired hands' quarters, in the back, until Mr. Knodt's family moved out, which was about six months later. Most of the nursery people came back to their homes, but others just had a terrible time.
- Chall: Was the Council for Civic Unity a Quaker group?
- Fujii: Yes. It was started by then. Then we formed a branch or chapter in Hayward. I was active in that. That's when I met Ray Marsh and John Guinea.
- Chall: They were the liberals of the community who were interested in helping you? This meant that if you joined the Council for Civic Unity that you had to go out and work among the Caucasians, which I'm sure you had been used to doing, anyway.
- Fujii: I was not one who became involved with the contact with the Caucasians. We generally had an intermediary. At one time, there was talk of a white front. Caucasians would go off and buy a house, and then sell it to a Japanese. I don't know that we had that happening here in Hayward, but it was a matter of educating people, or somebody telling somebody about a house being available. It was sort of a chain. It was the only way they could buy any land, or buy a house. They might buy land and then build on that land. It wasn't easy.
- Chall: What were you doing? What was your role in all this?
- Fujii: We would have little hearings. People who wanted homes and couldn't buy, they'd come and tell us their experiences. We would let the San Francisco office know about this and then they would come and do what they could do. We weren't actually involved in the work itself.

- Fujii: We also became involved, after a while, in getting jobs for minorities. By that time, most Japanese had jobs. Then we went into trying to get jobs for Mexican-Americans. Gradually, the unit dissolved. I can't remember the history.
- Chall: I've heard about it for a long time.
- Fujii: It was a good organization. My first exposure to this type of thing. I won't say I was exactly gung-ho, but I worked hard. I wasn't an activist by present-day standards.
- Chall: But you felt this was important for you to do?
- Fujii: Oh, yes.
- Chall: All the years you've been working in the nursery, have you had a certain amount of time that's free, which you can devote to community affairs during the day as well as the evening?
- Fujii: I tried to only get involved in activities that met in the evening. If there were luncheons in the afternoon I worked it out with the family. Actually my brother is the one who encouraged me to get involved with the Democratic party activities here. I suppose he sensed that perhaps I needed something [laughs] besides growing flowers.
- Chall: I suppose. Then when I thought about your work in the community and politics, I realized that, actually, you're the only member of the Japanese community who, until recently, has been active politically.
- Fujii: I received a lot of family support, too. They may not always have encouraged me to go because I was leaving my work, but they were supportive in whatever I did.
- Chall: Was the community supportive?
- Fujii: The Japanese community?
- Chall: Yes.
- Fujii: Yes, they have been supportive and I've always tried to be worthy of their support. I became active in the JACL [Japanese American Citizens League] right after I got back in 1947. That was for about four or five years. Then I dropped out of my activities there because other activities were taking more of my attention and required more time. I felt for the Japanese community a need for exposure and involvement in community-wide activities. So I tried to do what I could in that area, hoping that others would do the same. I also

South County profile

She's a medley of interests in 'low key'

By CARROL MILLS

HAYWARD — Kimi Fujii is by her own definition a "low-key" person. Definitely not an aggressive person, she chuckles in her quiet way. But she's not afraid to speak her mind either, even if in "guarded" phrases.

And through all the talk about Kimi Fujii comes the distinct impression that here is a very self-assured person. One whose self-assurance eliminates the need to be aggressive and enables her to accomplish much through her low-key approach.

A flower-grower in the wholesale family firm of Fujii Co., Inc., she prefers to be referred to as an "associate" in the business. It also includes the retail outlet of Fujii's Florist, 24949 Soto Road.

★ ★ ★

MISS FUJII, THE FOURTH child in a family of six, and her brother now operate the business, which was started by their father in 1920. Their parents, of whom she speaks with great respect, worked "very, very hard," to make it a success, she will tell you. Rutaro Fujii, her father, died some years ago. But her mother, with whom she lives across from the family greenhouses on Soto Road, is still busy with activities ranging from cooking to writing Haiku poetry, a form of Japanese verse.

Miss Fujii's interests are as varied but cover a broader spectrum from the private to the public.

She is a botanist and an art historian, having studied both fields at the University of Wisconsin, from which she graduated. She is an avid attendee of art shows, concerts and plays. She likes to hike and loves to travel. And she takes great pride and interest in her Japanese heritage.

Though Miss Fujii gives the impression of being a very private person, nearly all of her most personal interests find expression in some aspect of her public life.

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SHE IS A MEMBER of the Eden Township chapter of the Japanese-American Citizens League, the East Bay chapter of the San Francisco Ballet Guild, and the Hayward branch of the American Association of University Women.

She serves on the executive board of the Democratic State Central Committee, recently became the first woman director on the AC Transit District board, has been on the Alameda County Commission for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency for six years, serves on the St. Rose Hospital citizens advisory board, is completing her eighth year on the Hayward Human Relations Commission, and in the past has served 11 years on the California Spring Garden Show board.

"You can either sit at home and rot," is Miss Fujii's philosophy, "or you can get involved. And you'd better get involved."

But there is more to it with her than involvement for the sake of involvement. Her activities reflect a sense of deep personal commitment that has grown out of experience.

★ ★ ★

NOT ONLY DOES THE Fujii family have a tradition of community involvement starting in Japan, from where her father emigrated in 1902, but the World War II years and the plight of Japanese-Americans then and since have had their own impact on her.

She and all of her family except a married sister were

placed in a concentration camp in Utah during the war while a friend cared for the family business. Miss Fujii was fortunate enough after a year to gain admission to the University of Wisconsin, but her family remained in the camp for three more years.

It was a difficult experience. Living with 8,000 people in a mile-square camp she remembers as "a real test of your ability to get along with others."

"Your creativity revealed itself in activities such as flower arranging, writing poetry, basket weaving, wood sculpting. It was especially difficult for people who had children to maintain discipline. There was no family life."

Her reaction at the time, she says, was one of quiet acceptance but also of bitterness.

★ ★ ★

"OF COURSE, I WAS very bitter and I still am. The experience itself was certainly unjustified and shouldn't have ever happened to us because we are American citizens. But I realize we were the victims of wartime hysteria.

"I'm more philosophical about my bitterness now. Somehow I've closed that period of my life, sort of blocked it out. But these experiences like camp you just don't forget."

Upon her return to California and the release of those held in the camps, Miss Fujii immediately threw herself into the task of helping them make a new life for themselves.

She became a member of the California Council for Civic Unity, which attempted to find homes for the returning Japanese, many of whom were unable to buy or rent because of prejudice.

"There was so much hatred then," she recalls, "terrible prejudice."

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THOUGH CONVINCED RACIAL tensions have eased considerably since then, she believes there is still much to be overcome that will take more time than she has left to live.

In her work as a human relations commissioner, many problems have been exposed, she says, "but they haven't been removed."

Her political activities in the Democratic Party, she says, have also "provided an outlet to express myself about the feelings of minorities."

As a woman, Miss Fujii says she has "never been in the position where I personally felt inequality some face in salaries, but I can understand what these women are up against. And I'm certainly for equal pay and equal recognition for equal work."

"I feel women have a lot to offer. They should try to get on boards and commissions. There is certainly a lack of women serving on them."

"But there are certain aspects of Women's Liberation I can't appreciate; for instance, the terribly aggressive — or maybe militant is a better word — nature of some women. The kind that want to go to the men's john. I don't think you are as effective if you have to perform like that."

"But I guess it's the time for demonstrations, so maybe I shouldn't be so critical of my own kind."

Fujii: was becoming involved politically. There were a lot of the Japanese who were shy about getting involved in civic activities dominated by Caucasians, even joining a Caucasian Christian church. So they all went out over to the church in San Lorenzo, it's called the Holiness Church. They have a Japanese minister, and the congregation is all Japanese -- a comfortable common bond.

Chall: Is that a Christian church?

Fujii: Yes. The Holiness Church. Quite fundamental.

Chall: Is that so?

Fujii: It's on Lewelling. Right near the freeway.

Chall: I know where it is. I hadn't realized it was Japanese. Is this second and third generation Japanese?

Fujii: Yes.

II ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY, 1948-1977

The Eighth Congressional District Women's Club

- Fujii: I enjoyed my activities in the community in general, being with the Democratic party. There are some women, like Mary Walters -- I don't know if you remember her or not -- who took me under her wing.
- Chall: What year would this have been?
- Fujii: About '48 or '49.
- Chall: That goes back a long way, before I moved into the area. There were active Democratic women then?
- Fujii: Yes, there was a club.
- Chall: What was it called?
- Fujii: It was the Eighth Congressional Democratic Women's Club. They were mostly older women. If they saw a younger person coming in they all welcomed her; me, for one. [Laughs]
- Chall: Were there other younger women coming in?
- Fujii: There were some. But most of the women had children. They were married and just couldn't get away. I'm sure they tried to recruit them. They just weren't available and it was still the time of one-car families.
- Chall: How did you happen to get into this group, then?
- Fujii: I think I just read about their meeting in the newspaper. I'm sure I didn't know any Democratic women before. In fact, it didn't occur to me to become active, or become an active member of an organization, any political organization. In fact, my brother Ken called my attention to a meeting of the Democratic women that was

- Fujii: announced in the newspaper. Truman was running. We had to get active. [Laughter]
- Chall: Apparently, your family was in favor of backing Truman and thought this would be a good thing to send you off to do.
- Fujii: In spite of the atomic bomb. [Laughter]
- Chall: That's right. All kinds of conflicts. What did you do, then, when you joined the group? What were your first activities? Helping elect Truman?
- Fujii: I think the first thing I did for them, besides going to luncheons and making little contributions, was, with instructions from them, to get involved in my precinct. Then I worked in the Hayward headquarters. Claudia Zumwalt was heading it then. We still had people like Enid Foster, the wife of postmaster Tony Foster, and Lillian McBarron, who are still here. Most of the women have died.
- They were very active. Mostly, the women in that group raised money for candidates. The luncheon in a club member's home would be a dollar, but by the time you left that place, I think you spent about three dollars, because they'd have a donation for this, or they'd have a little raffle. [Laughs] It was very clever. I'm glad that they had these schemes going. It was very necessary to have the money. Then they'd have these potlucks where everybody brings a dish. You'd still pay a dollar. So, the dollar's the profit. They'd have bingo, or something also.
- Chall: These were just for women, these lunches? Or did they have dinners?
- Fujii: They also had dinners for candidates. I think we had some functions at the Alta Mira club in San Leandro. The men would come with their wives. We never had more than about 150 or 200 people show up. But that's all profit, because somebody was a member of the Alta Mira club -- Annis Rock, I guess -- so we could rent the building reasonably. Maybe we got it for free, knowing Annis. [Laughter]
- Chall: Yes, that's a name with a long history of devoted service to the Democratic party.
- Fujii: Yes. Those were fun days. The women were truly dedicated to the party and their candidate.
- Chall: That was a good outlet for you, then?
- Fujii: I should say! We got to know the candidates. These women were the ones that initially backed George Miller when he ran for Congress. Then Jack Holmdahl, when he was running for senate.

- Fujii: Nick [Nicholas] Petris, when he first ran for the assembly. Also Robert Crown. Frank Dunn, when he decided to run for supervisor. George Miller was always a great loved one. Everybody loved him and they always worked very hard for him. Other than that, I think the main function was to raise money for the party and register voters, address mailers, look up telephone numbers of voters (Democrats), volunteer for headquarter staffing, etc. Then we'd attend some of the functions in San Francisco. The Jefferson-Jackson Day Dinner. It was unheard of for me to pay twenty-five dollars for anything, but Mary Walters said, "Well, you know, it's worth it. If you just save so much a week, you can go." [Laughter]
- Chall: That was a good way to put it. You must have been the youngest member of that group for many years, then.
- Fujii: Yes, I think I was. Except for another girl who came in from Alameda, and Mrs. Toby Gold from San Lorenzo. I don't know what happened to her. But she was active, also. I learned a lot from these ladies, because they'd been working for George Miller for so long. They were really the core of the Democratic party as far as I could see.
- Chall: What did you learn from them? Can you capsulize what they taught you?
- Fujii: One thing I learned about was how to get along with candidates -- besides getting along with each other -- and how to work toward getting a candidate elected. It's very hard. And the contacts you make are valuable. It was also a great way to meet candidates on a national level, because they'd come down and talk to this little women's group, the only women's group in the whole area. [Laughter]
- Chall: So they actually would come into this area?
- Fujii: Not too frequently but they needed us too. I remember our going off to San Francisco -- when Estes Kefauver was running for president, I remember going with the women to meet Mrs. Kefauver. I enjoyed that. It got me away from Hayward and with other fellow Democrats from other areas.
- Chall: In this case, you were really working entirely with Caucasian people, then. And now this was no problem to you? And if you were doing precinct work, you certainly were. Did you knock on doors?
- Fujii: Oh yes, I did.
- Chall: How did that feel?
- Fujii: I was frightened. Even to this day, precinct work really bothers

Fujii: me because you are knocking on a stranger's door. But around here now, I know almost everybody. I don't talk to people so much. I'll just put my name on the literature, and attach it to their door if they aren't home. It's the same people. The neighborhood here hasn't changed too much. And with the large apartment houses, you can't get into them anyway. And they're very transient people, who aren't very interested in politics or political issues. You, having done that kind of work, you know. I haven't done any precinct work in a long time.

Chall: But you did it, and you went to the luncheons. You did participate then in active political work. So you were really coming out in front -- in a modest way.

Fujii: I never thought about it in that way.

Chall: But still, you were.

Fujii: Oh, yes. I did a lot of the addressing. In those days we had to address everything by hand. Generally, we'd get together to do that. But I was always surprised at the number of people that did not show up. You'd think there would have been more people, whether they be Caucasians or any other nationality.

Chall: Showing up to help at headquarters?

Fujii: It was always hard to get volunteers. It wasn't until we started paying them that we really got people coming in. Over the years, we started paying the headquarters' managers, is that what you call them?

Chall: Yes, that might have been. In those days, you had to take all the precinct lists, whatever they had, and convert them onto cards. That was hours and hours of just plain hard labor.

Fujii: Yes; what a chore. Well, that took up a lot of my time. I would rather do that than knock on doors, somehow. I think people do have their place in life in politics. [Laughter] I used to do a lot of telephoning. Somehow the confrontation scared me, the direct confrontation, frightened me. I was, and I suppose am still afraid of being rejected at the door, not realizing, of course, that maybe it's because of the person I am supporting. You feel paranoid after a while. Then you have to work yourself up. Actually, people help you with that.

Chall: This was a supportive group, then. They wanted you with them and they accepted you as one of them, regardless of any other factors?

Fujii: I think it was because they were older. They didn't feel any kind

- Fujii: of competition, I'm sure. Also, my being from an older family in Hayward. My sisters went through school. I think that helped. It builds a certain amount of trust. I think that helped. The fact that we were in the nursery business, too.
- Chall: You were established in the community.
- Fujii: I think that really did have a lot to do with it.
- Chall: Gradually, what did you do with these women as the Hayward area began to build up quite a bit in the '50s. I suppose the Democratic party became bigger.
- Fujii: Yes. I think the biggest step was in the early fifties, when the CDC [California Democratic Council] was born, and they met at Asilomar.

Development of the Council of Democratic Clubs

- Chall: Did you go to that first conference?
- Fujii: I was one of the first members and I attended the conference as a delegate from the Eighth Congressional District Democratic Women's Club.
- Chall: Is that right? You went to the Asilomar Conference. Now that's historic. [Laughter] What do you remember about that?
- Fujii: I remember first of all, Mary Walters was there. She encouraged me to go. Then I was voted as a delegate, I guess from our club, to go. There were several who went as delegates -- Verna Floyd, Eulalia Anderson. One of the first things I remember was ... I used to hear about Pat Brown all the time when he was the attorney general, the only Democrat up there. They were trying to get him ready to run for governor. I saw this big man walking up the walkway. Mary Walters went up to him; she knew him quite well, and she asked him when he was going to run -- if he was going to run that particular year. He said, "No, Mary, this is not the time yet." He was just waiting for his time. [Laughter] Smart man. That impressed me. Also, another person who impressed me was George Miller, the senator.
- Chall: That's George Miller, Jr.
- Fujii: He had a very booming voice. A very brilliant and dynamic type person. I don't know whether he was the chairman or not, but that grassroots organizations was so necessary. That was the beginning

- Fujii: of our winning at the polls, I think. Of course, Edmund G. Brown ran; I think two years later, he ran for governor.
- Chall: He ran in 1958.
- Fujii: Six years later, then.
- Chall: That's right. Nineteen fifty-four he ran again for attorney general. He won again. The only Democrat who won statewide office, again, as it happened. Did you feel this was a dynamic kind of conference, the one at Asilomar?
- Fujii: Yes, I did. Being a complete freshman, I really was quite excited and a bit awed. I felt it was what the party needed. Still, who was I to make such a decision? I didn't know too much. I was learning from everybody, but I'm glad it developed into what it did.
- Chall: Did you go to Fresno--the first convention that actually formed the CDC in Fresno in November, 1953?
- Fujii: I must have gone. I don't remember exactly, but I'm quite sure I did. We had a CDC chapter here.
- Chall: Did you really?
- Fujii: Let's see, we formed a council of clubs. I don't remember if it was the county-wide or not. Martin Huff was chairman. I think I was secretary one year. I don't think I was the first year. Let's see, Martin was young, too, at that time. My age. [Laughter] But the leaders were fine. Oh, Van Dempsy was another. I'm glad to see Van's still around. But he's seen a lot of us come and go, I'm sure.
- Chall: He was one of the early founders, then, of the CDC in this area?
- Fujii: He was among them, yes. I always remember Martin Huff. He really was a dedicated, a true dedicated Democrat, Martin was.
- Chall: I didn't realize he came from this area. He was eventually treasurer of the party, I think.
- Fujii: Yes, I think so. Now he has a fine job in Sacramento.
- Chall: What did those women think of this CDC organization?
- Fujii: Oh, they were all for it.
- Chall: They were.
- Fujii: Oh, yes.

Fujii: Gradually, I worked up into...I don't know how it happened, really, but I became a representative to the women's group that met in San Francisco. It was a result of my being appointed a member of the state central committee and was elected co-chairman of the Ninth Congressional District by the Ninth Congressional District delegates. This meant that I would serve on the executive committee of the state central committee. All the women co-chairmen met to form the women's division of the state central committee. We formed a north and south division. All of us were expected to form women's division units in our respective congressional districts. We had an outstanding group of women in the Ninth Congressional District helping me. I shall always feel indebted to them.

[end tape 2, side 1. begin tape 2, side 2]

The State Central Committee

Chall: First tell me who appointed you to the state central committee.

Fujii: Carlos Bee.

Chall: That would have been what year, do you think?

Fujii: I must have that information here, somewhere. I became a member of the state central committee in 1962. That's the same year that Congressman [Don] Edwards became congressman. I remember that because we both became co-chairmen of the Ninth Congressional District.

Chall: I assume then that if Carlos Bee appointed you, you must have helped on his campaign.

Fujii: Oh, yes. I was on his campaign right from the very beginning when he ran for city council in Hayward, then when he ran for the assembly.

Chall: Who was the other woman whom he appointed. Do you recall?

Fujii: I was appointed.

Chall: Then there had to be another woman.

Fujii: There had to be a male. Oh, you mean a member of the state central committee? Oh, Rita Strong.

Chall: Rita Strong?

Fujii: Yes. And Dorcas Morison.

- Chall: That would have been a man. Let's see. In those days, elected officials appointed, three women and two men?
- Fujii: Yes, I think he had five appointments. Three and two. Then he appointed someone from Livermore. Manuel Medeiros, I think it was. He was a barber. Then he had Bill Bringham, a member of the painters union. I'm pretty sure they were the ones at that time.
- Chall: Was this your first exposure to the state central committee?
- Fujii: Oh yes, it certainly was.
- Chall: What was that experience?
- Fujii: Well, you know, the funniest thing...my first experience was this. You wonder how the party is governed in California. Here we get to a certain local level and we wonder who's handing down the orders, rules, and so forth [Laughs]. Then you think, it's not here. Maybe it's at the county level. It's not at the county level. Then you go to the district level, which is the eighth congressional, the ninth congressional, or you go to San Francisco to some of those meetings. The district meeting. They'll call an area-wide meeting and you don't get any kind of direction directly from anybody there. And you wonder, who's doing it all? You think, well, here you are at the level of the state central committee. It must be here. But it wasn't there. It really dumbfounded me. I was still trying to figure it out. So I thought it must be the assemblymen, and the senators, and the governor. It has to be. At least I thought. [Laughter]
- Chall: And what did you finally figure out? When you became so much more experienced?
- Fujii: Actually, we didn't have a chance for input too much. Then the direction came from people who were state officers. This is the way I read it, anyway. Then our delegates to Washington, D.C. They seemed so far away, but I think they played a very important part.
- Chall: National committee--men and women, you mean?
- Fujii: They, and our senators, and congressmen. Gradually, however, there was reaction against this. Of course, the CDC was very important. We got more grassroots input from them. And our state central committee officers played a more important role in this. They got Chicano and black representation among the officers also. The blacks were becoming very vocal at this point. Gradually, the Chicanos. The state central committee formed a steering committee that was quite effective.

Chall: Were you on the steering committee?

Fujii: I was on the steering committee for one year, but I couldn't attend all the meetings. They'd have one in Los Angeles and one up here in San Francisco or Sacramento and it was costly. It was difficult to get away.

Chall: How big was the steering committee?

Fujii: I think the steering committee had one representative from each congressional district. It's changed since then.

Chall: So that still would make it a pretty good-sized group.

Fujii: Yes. Very much. Also, I think the platform committee had an important role. I was never on the platform committee. Those appointments were made by the chairman of the party and the officers, I guess. I didn't mind if I wasn't, because there was only so much you could do for the party. It's hard enough just to get to the executive meetings, committee meetings, and it takes a lot of time and money, your own money, to go down to Los Angeles or up to Sacramento. And the time from your work.

Chall: What were these executive meetings like?

Fujii: We'd be informed of the policy of the party. They seemed to be getting ready for the next election all the time. Getting candidates ready and educating our people in the precincts how to get out the vote. That was the biggest thing all the time -- get out the vote.

Developing candidates. Raising money. Every two years, you'd get this fancy brochure, booklet, on voter registration. [Laughter] How to get out the vote. And candidate development was terribly important. They're still working on that. But now, the platform committee is even more important, it seems to me. Though I haven't been on the state committee for about two years, I guess.

Chall: Who appointed you? Was it always Carlos Bee all the years that you were on the committee?

Fujii: Except the last year I was appointed by Don Edwards. Let's see, two years ago, I was appointed by Don Edwards. Because Carlos had passed away, you see, and Don was kind enough to appoint me.

Chall: Who, among the leaders of the party, do you recollect as being the stronger, more effective ones? Just off the top of your head, do you recall Roger Kent, [Charles] Manatt, [William] Munnell?

Fujii: I remember Roger Kent very well. I remember Bob Coate. And I remember Libby Smith Gatov, and Clara Shirpser.

Chall: Ann Eliaser?

Fujii: Oh yes, Ann Alanson [Eliaser]. She was fine. And Boas.

Chall: Roger Boas?

Fujii: He was to me, not too effective. At the moment, I don't recall.... Of course, there's Carmen Warschaw, she was a very important person. And Eleanor Fowle.

The Woman's Place

Chall: In terms of women, in this kind of setup, how did you find that women were being utilized?

Fujii: I think most of the time, they didn't really want us there. They would just as soon do without us, that is, the party regulars on the higher level. I happened to be at a level which was more comfortable than the gals like Ann Eliaser and Mrs. Shirpser in the roles that they played. And Eleanor Fowle and Pat Nisbet, who was the chairman [women's division] for a while. The men wanted to keep the women's group just as a fund-raising group; just to help get out the vote. They really didn't want the women.

The men were not accepting the women into the party on the policy-making level or decision-making level. Whether it is the personality of the men who became involved in politics which makes them think that way, I don't know. But at least I personally wasn't faced with that. There was some cruel and inhuman treatment that these women had to face.

Chall: Can you recall some of those times? Some of those special cruel treatments?

Fujii: I don't know what the incidents were, exactly. But I know the greatest supporter of the women was Bob Coate, who's no longer here. He realized the importance that the role of women was more than just fund raising. This is just what I would hear or I'd find out about through the grapevine. Not directly. Oh, a couple of times, it was direct, I guess. What position was this man? I think he was vice-chairman, and he really was very cruel to one of the women. She was chairman of the women's division of northern California. He had her crying. I don't know what the incident was actually.

- Fujii: This was at one of the state conventions. He had taken her in the corner and taken her to task. She's such a beautiful person I don't see how she put up with the treatment that she got from him. They were always accusing the women. There seems to be a special mentality of many men involved in politics. They're being threatened all the time, whether it's by men or women, and they take it out on the women, it seems. You know, we're whipping posts.
- Chall: You were able to witness this because you were down far enough in the ranks to watch it without having to be a part of it. That's actually very interesting, because I've talked so often to women who were at that level, the upper level, and sometimes they either were blanking out some of these incidents, or maybe they hadn't felt it as you did. But I'm interested in your observations. Who was the woman involved?
- Fujii: I'd prefer not to give her name since I don't know the entire background to the incident.
- Chall: She was running for, or hoped to be state chairman?
- Fujii: Yes. Of course, at this time, she wasn't trying. I don't think she was a candidate at that time.
- Chall: So this was just when she was in charge of the women's division in northern California?
- Fujii: Yes. And the men just didn't think that you should be any more than just a fund-raising group. You shouldn't get involved in anything else.
- Chall: What might the women have been trying to do that would have upset the men from time to time that you can recall?
- Fujii: Men didn't want women to take over the party in anyway. They didn't want the women to run for chairman of the party. Carmen Warschaw is an example of one who has always been unafraid to run. She was very ambitious; but golly, she was called "dragon lady" and cruel things. Terrible. Just awful.
- Chall: Did you get to know her at all?
- Fujii: Not too well. She was just somebody up there. She always played a prominent role in the party.
- Chall: Was she effective as you saw her?
- Fujii: In southern California, I thought she was very effective, a great fund raiser. But there was always some competition between northern

Fujii: and southern California -- all the time.

Chall: Were you aware of the time when Ann Eliaser was trying to become chairman of the party in northern California and Jack Brooks made it?

Fujii: Oh, yes. That was so unfair. She certainly deserved it, because Jack Brooks, with all his money.... You see, the party, the Democratic party needed money, all the time they needed money. And this is again at my level.

Chall: Yes, that's what I'm interested in getting.

Fujii: The party needed money and they thought, well, here's this brilliant multi-millionaire willing to run for the post, and he probably will donate a lot of money. I think that's probably the reason why he got it. Because he certainly didn't do anything for the party of any significance that I'm aware of besides contribute money -- which is very important, I'll admit. He's a very loyal Democrat. And I remember his lending his airplane and pilot to candidates. Also for women's division activities. He never felt threatened by women. In fact he was always supportive of our local activities.

I don't really think that he was that interested in becoming chairman. It was the fact that there were people who felt he deserved it because of his generous contributions and they pushed him, you see.

Chall: They may not have wanted her to be chairman, in addition.

Fujii: Well, it could be, she's a woman of ability and men may have felt threatened. You know, Ann's an amazing girl. I really am very fond of Ann. I used to go to some of the meetings in San Francisco called by her because I represented the women's division in this area. Partly because I was on the state central committee also. I don't really know how this all happened. I hadn't thought about it that much. She raised the level of women's activities.

It became more expensive, I'll admit. I, as a country girl, going over to Ann Alanson's beautiful home and lunching with all these women who were from wealthy families. She was trying, I guess, in one way, to get more money into the party, too, by getting women of wealth and high intellect more interested in the party; by having beautiful luncheons at her home, or having a luncheon in a beautiful apartment of another person who was well off.

Chall: This was the Democratic Women of the Bay Area, that organization which she set up in 1964 -- out from under the party as such. She printed a newsletter, and did have big luncheon meetings, and

Chall: interesting speakers, and programs. She raised the intellectual level.

Fujii: She did. She really tried very hard and I admire her for that. It takes so darn much effort to do this, and she had the means. You had to have independent means, or you just couldn't do it. She had the invitations printed at I. Magnin's -- very fancy invitations. They just weren't the ordinary kind that you got mimeographed.
[Laughter]

Chall: It was the kind you couldn't ignore either, I guess. If you got one, you went. [Laughter]

Fujii: She formed this women's group that was to pay five dollars a year. There was a lot of resistance at first. You know, five dollars a year -- that was a lot of money. But she went ahead and organized it. I think it was successful for a couple of years.

She worked hard getting this organized. Women do have a place and they can raise money. However, I don't know whether she was pushing so much for a position for herself, but she was encouraging women to run. She was a great supporter of women and good male candidates. She always credited Roger Kent for getting her started in politics.

I remember watching her for the first time. She was so attractive; as a person, too, I suppose. I didn't know her at all. She was either secretary or treasurer of the state central committee, and she'd be sitting up there, in front of the membership, at the table, and I think that was the first time she'd gotten active in the party. Roger Kent was very, very encouraging. She'd always, always, always, at that time, and even after, credit anything that she did, because he had supported her.

Roger Kent was great. He also supported Libby Smith. When she became U.S. Treasurer, I imagine he had a lot to do with that, too. He got her on the national committee. I shouldn't say he did, but I think he played a very important role.

Chall: Did you find she was an effective person, to the extent that you were able to watch her in action?

Fujii: She was really a dynamic person. She works hard; and is very intense. She was a different personality from Clara Shirpser, for instance. Clara -- she got around and she had her ideas. I knew she had brains and she was a good person and supportive but she was kind of flighty. She loves the social. I don't think Libby cared for the social that much. Then Ann came along and tried to raise the level of this social bit to a more expensive plane. That was all right but

Fujii: it was for certain women. I couldn't keep up with that.

Chall: I see. [Chuckles]

Fujii: But I kind of enjoyed sitting around with them. [Laughs]

Chall: You did get around all those years, I must say. You saw many aspects of the Democratic party from the lowest precinct level to some of the upper regions of the party activity in the executive and steering committees. So you had a chance to see the party operating at many levels.

Fujii: Yes, I did. I never did think much of it at the time, but when you think back on it, I guess I did. It was quite an education for me. I really enjoyed it, though.

Chall: How did you translate this education back into the grass roots? What were your activities with the local party? The clubs?

Fujii: As I think about it now, I think I was a liaison between the local clubs and the executive committee. People expected me perhaps not to get involved in the precinct work itself, so much, but to be a representative there and to help in getting the headquarters organized. Doing things like getting precinct lists from the county, or getting the mailers out.

I remember one time we didn't know whether we could get the mailers out, and I had to go all the way to Berkeley with someone. I can't remember what the occasion was. But there was a bit of a feud going on among certain chairmen I hadn't been aware of, at the level below me. So when I went over to Berkeley to get these mailed, there was Joe Close, and then the co-chairman from that district, a female, meeting us there. And they didn't say anything. [Laughter] I don't think they expected me there. They just expected the other chairmen. So the mail went through. I wish I could remember the incident.

Chall: I guess there were little internecine battles, weren't there?

Fujii: Oh, all the time. Something was going on. I think that I was able to avoid them, really. I was involved in them, but not so intensely involved that I'd form prejudices or make anybody too angry with me. I think I got along with the men all right, which was important, because they were the ones who'd always step on your toes it seemed.

Chall: They were stepping on each other's toes too, as men I suppose, not just the women's toes?

Fujii: The thing that I noticed about men in politics. Here I was a single

- Fujii: gal, needing some activity, I really think it's a good place for single women, if you don't want to get involved with any of the men, and you're going because you're a dedicated Democrat and you want to participate actively. Many men are so darn selfish. They're so darn self-centered; and they're only eager for themselves, so that they don't have time for the women. There may be some hanky-panky going on between some men and women that I've never been aware of, but there really isn't that much time for it. Men are meeting with each other, trying to figure something out. And the women, well, we're there [laughs] -- to make coffee, serve the refreshments, answer the phone, etc.
- Chall: To address envelopes.
- Fujii: Or register people. [Laughs]
- Chall: So at all levels, then, your impression is that the men are working these major deals out together, and the women don't really have much of a place in determining policy.
- Fujii: I've always felt that. And if there are some women who are aggressive enough, they're either pushed out of the party activity very soon, or they just leave because they have been harrassed.
- Chall: Is that so? You actually saw women who were treated this way and left? Was this on the local level in Hayward, or at the state committee level? What about the Hayward area?
- Fujii: I think the politics in Hayward is different. As a matter of fact, I have noticed some have been leaving, but I think in one instance, it was because the husband resented her going out so much. She would have been a very active woman in the party. I've even forgotten her name now. In Hayward, there might have been a little bit of hanky-panky going on. Not too much.
- Chall: I was wondering whether if down at the very lowest level, men and women who are working for the party, generally are working in it together, to get out the vote, and to help the party functioning.
- Fujii: Dedicated.
- Chall: Unless somebody's really working, hoping to become a candidate, they don't push each other around a lot, do they?
- Fujii: No. No.
- Chall: I don't know whether that's true in the clubs, whether the desire to be a club officer was as important to the men as it was to be an officer of the party, and thus they did not allow women to have much

- Chall: of a place.
- Fujii: If somebody was politically ambitious, he'd want to be president of a club. I remember when March Fong Eu was, gosh -- is it all right to have all this stuff going on the tape?
- Chall: Yes.
- Fujii: She had political aspirations, way, way, way back. I don't think this is hearsay, because the gal who told me this is gone. Helen Calista. We were very good friends. She said, "You know, March called me the other day and she said she wanted to become an officer of the club in that district." They said, "Well, how about secretary?" She said, "That's not important enough." So she formed her own club and became president. [Laughs] You see, you've got to be terribly ambitious!
- Chall: That's great.
- Fujii: I'm telling stories on another gal. It's all right. What the heck? She knew how to maneuver and I admire her for that. She's been very successful.
- Chall: That's really what we're trying to find out in this study. How women operated in the days before the women's movement pushed them ahead with lots of support. How women, who really wanted to gain leadership, rose in the party. How they did it, and to what extent they were permitted to by men or other women. Maybe there wasn't any competition, but I think we find that there was.
- Fujii: She's a very smart gal, March. The fact that she started in this way...that'd be great!
- Chall: She knew how to operate right off.
- Fujii: And she, herself, successful in her profession. She had a doctors degree, didn't she, a Ph.D.?
- Chall: Yes.
- Fujii: That in itself is so darn impressive that the club members would go right along with her. I'm glad she's been so successful. She had a remarkable group of people supporting her when she first ran for the assembly. She herself worked hard.
- Chall: So you found the party an interesting social and intellectual outlet, is that it? Without getting deeply and emotionally involved.
- Fujii: Yes, I did. Perhaps it's my nature, I just couldn't get that

Fujii: emotionally involved. My greatest emotional involvement was when Adlai Stevenson lost. I think everybody collapsed. I worked my way out of that. It took me a long time, about six months, I guess. But I think that was my biggest lesson. If he did anything for Democrats, I think it was his losing the election, and then being responsible indirectly for getting us back into the party again.

Chall: Was that in '56 or '52?

Fujii: The first time.

Chall: The first time, in '52. Well, that gave the party its impetus, in many ways, to get in there and fight.

Fujii: Yes.

Chall: When did you go as a delegate to the national convention? I think you told me and I lost the slip of paper.

Fujii: I went as an official delegate to the national convention in 1964 at Atlantic City. In 1960, I went to the convention in Los Angeles.

Observing the Democratic National Convention, 1960

Chall: As an alternate or as an observer?

Fujii: As an observer. It was in that sports arena. I think that was a new building at the time, and the acoustics were terrible. I could hear better in the ladies lounge, and I spent more time there than out in the balcony. [Laughs] I didn't know anybody well enough to be invited to any of the parties, so I was sort of an outsider. However, I did attend the big -- I don't know where the meeting was -- in the Coliseum, I think -- the place where Kennedy made his acceptance speech.

Chall: It wouldn't have been in the same arena?

Fujii: No, it wasn't. It was outdoors. The sports arena is enclosed. It was outdoors. I remember that.

Chall: How did you happen to go down, even as an observer? Was there a group of you from Hayward who went down?

Fujii: No. I had a sister living down there. Then I was told there were some tickets available, if I wanted to sit in the balcony. I got some from George P. Miller, Congressman Miller.

- Chall: Do you recall the demonstrations for Stevenson in the gallery when he was nominated?
- Fujii: You mean for Kennedy?
- Chall: No, I mean for Stevenson. There was a group that still hoped that Stevenson might be nominated.
- Fujii: No, I don't really recall. Maybe I was....
- Chall: You might have been in the ladies' lounge. That was a rather dramatic time. Were you backing Kennedy at the time?
- Fujii: Yes, I was leaning towards him. I didn't think we should have a two-time loser running again. Stevenson was getting older. I don't think he really wanted to run anyway. There wasn't any point in having a candidate like him to run again. Losing twice is certainly not a good track record, obviously.
- Chall: I see. So you weren't part of that pro-Stevenson group. They were very active, the Stevenson people. What was your reaction to the nomination of Lyndon Johnson as vice-president. Did you have any feelings about that?
- Fujii: I just thought that was a political move, a desire to get the southern vote and unite the party. He didn't impress me too much.
- [end tape 2, side 2]

Hayward Area Democratic Party Politics

[Interview 2, April 26, 1977]
[begin tape 3, side 1]

- Chall: I've noticed sometimes that there were several Democratic clubs in Hayward. Did they grow up as a result of the reapportioning of the districts or was it a result of ideological matters?
- Fujii: I belonged to the Hayward Democratic Club, which isn't in existence anymore. They were not members of CDC. We felt CDC members were a little too left wing.
- Chall: Is that an old time club?
- Fujii: No.
- Chall: It came in after the CDC?

Fujii: It came in after it. I have no idea when it started. I know we met over at Lillian McBarron's house and Jack Smith was elected president, and I was elected secretary. I don't know how many years.

Chall: Well, that's okay. So it had a membership made up of, what? People who were relatively active in the business community? Professionals?

Fujii: Yes. They were people like Tony Foster, the postmaster, and his wife -- the more conservative Democrats, I'd say. Jack Smith's mother and his relatives. Also, I remember Resti Zaballos, Joe and Lester Moniz, Francis McBarron, Francis and Toni Dunn, Mary Sherman, Mary and John Pappas. I guess we were more middle-of-the-road types, and I don't know if there was another club that would have attracted the more liberal people or not at the time. Then later the DEMOS was formed. You may know of them.

Chall: Was the only CDC club the women's club?

Fujii: At that time; that I belonged to. I had dual membership -- Hayward Democratic Club and Eighth Congressional District Democratic Women. The women's club was certainly a great believer in the grassroots movement and that's what the CDC was. Somehow or other, I don't know what happened to our Hayward group. It just gradually disintegrated. You can tell just by the names, some of the names, what kind of people we were. [Laughter]

Chall: Did you feel more comfortable in that group than in the CDC group? I guess though you were comfortable with the women.

Fujii: I was comfortable with the women. And I was comfortable with this group [Hayward Democrats] There were just no great challenging issues that they wanted to get involved in. It was a group that helped run elections in Hayward, and we supported the headquarters. Then, at that time, I think John Pappas came into the picture. He worked very hard as a party leader. I have to give him a lot of credit. In Hayward. In those days, there just wasn't too much action.

However, people like Mrs. Foster would say, you know, they remembered the time when the Democrats did win; let's see, when Roosevelt won. And I guess they had quite a movement going on then. After that election they carried a casket on their shoulders and went over to the Republican headquarters and left it there. [Laughter] They marched through town in the early morning.

Chall: Which election was that?

Fujii: It's way back in the '30s. Roosevelt beat Hoover. It was really quite a group then.

Chall: Jack Smith, and the Fosters, and Francis Dunn, and John Pappas, they were the leaders in the community, to a great extent. They were in the city council and in the legislature.

Fujii: Jack wasn't on the city council yet.

Chall: But he made it in. Very active.

Fujii: One of our objectives was to get more Democrats in the city offices.

Chall: Did you sponsor Carlos Bee?

Fujii: I helped him. But at that time, there wasn't any Democratic club that I belonged to that he would have been a member of. I remember his coming down to see us. There was an issue in town about the Hayward library when he was running for council, and we were asking him, "What are you going to do about that library?" [Laughs] I think he said something about putting it in the plaza. We thought that was a terrible place.

Chall: It's still a problem. When you became co-chairman of your congressional district, that was in '62 with Don Edwards?

Fujii: Yes.

Chall: What did you do as co-chairman?

Fujii: One of the responsibilities that we had was to raise money for the party.

Chall: Oh, yes.

Fujii: We were supposed to. We were told we had to raise \$600 apiece.

Chall: Really? A person?

Fujii: \$1200 for the district. To pay into the state central committee. So I tried to have a fund raiser or two. I think I tried to make the \$600 and I think I made it with the help of a lot of women. I wrote to Don Edwards about his share. [Laughs]

Chall: Good for you.

Fujii: I said, "Don't you think the people down in San Jose might want to help us raise this money?" He came through with a \$600 check. [Laughs]

Chall: He was a wealthy man.

- Fujii: Yes. But that was the last time he ever contributed that amount of money.
- Chall: So the central committee really put the screws on all of you, all over the districts to raise money?
- Fujii: Yes. I think we were one of the few districts that really came up with the money. I was quite proud of us for having done it. Yet, you almost feel like a fool, because nobody else has done it. They just didn't feel it was their job to do it, I guess.
- Chall: How did you raise it? Do you recall?
- Fujii: We had some dinners. In fact, somewhere, I came across some letter-heads. We would have people like -- let's see, once we had, was it Dan Inouye who came down?
- Chall: Who?
- Fujii: Dan Inouye, the U.S. Senator from Hawaii.
- Chall: Oh, yes.
- Fujii: He came down with us. We would have Don Edwards featured as a guest. We'd try to get some name person. Since the district ran into Livermore, and Hayward, and Fremont, we would have a sizeable number of people show up. We tried to find a place that would attract more people. Fremont would insist on having something down there, but we always had better turnouts when we had it in Hayward.
- But I think we had a very good working committee. I was very fortunate in having some dedicated women who were willing to help. I would ask men for their names.
- Chall: Who were some of those women?
- Fujii: Some of the women? Adele Levine, for one. She was very good. One of the greatest people. And Mary Pappas was very good. She was just tops. She would help John, and actually Mary did all the work, I guess. Marge Medeiros was very good. She got her husband Joe Medeiros involved. There were Adele McHale, Ann Medeiros -- I could always depend on them all the time. Rita Strong, Peggy Lepore, Ann Henderson, Rita Vandenburg, Pat Baker, Ilene Weinreb, Sara Conner, Pat Hillis, Hazel Triplett, Jo Miller (our wonderful artist), Lottie Smith, Jean Wagner, Miriam Phillips, Maureen Foster, Mary Williams. Dorcas Morison. Rita Strong -- oh, she was good. She just put the screws on everyone. [Laughter] She was very helpful. There may be more. I can't think of them right now. There must be more, because I couldn't have done it by myself.

Hayward Pair To Receive Honors At Luncheon

Kimi Fujii and Mrs. Joseph (Marjorie) Medeiros, tomorrow will be among Alameda County women in government to be honored at a San Francisco luncheon attended by Gov. and Mrs. Edmund G. Brown. Both are Hayward residents.

The first northern California event to be sponsored by the newly formed Women's Division working under aegis of the California Democratic State Central Committee, it is expected to attract upward of 350 luncheon guests. It will

be held at the Four Seas Restaurant in Chinatown.

Women appointees, in addition to women government leaders will be honored, according to Mrs. John M. Fowle, northern California Democratic Women's chairman. Gov. and Mrs. Brown will be the principal speakers.

Miss Fujii, a resident of Soto Road, is a member of the board of directors, First District Agricultural Association, as is Mrs. Medeiros. The latter makes her home on Wren



KIMI FUJII



MRS. JOE MEDEIROS

Plaudits Tomorrow From The Governor's Wife

Court. Miss Fujii's efforts as chairman of the California Spring Home and Garden Show this year fell under her association duties.

Other Alameda County women honorees include Mmes. Charlotte Lewis of Albany, member of the Advisory Commission on the Status of Women; Ruth Avakian, member of the advisory

Council for Fair Employment Practices; Eva Content Goodwin, member, Program Advisory Committee to the Consumer Counsel; Doris Leonard, member Dag Hammarskjold Memorial Committee; Clara Shirpser, also Consumer Counsel, all of Berkeley, and Mrs. Faye Mitchell of Oakland, member of the State Board of Cosmetology.

October, 1966

Governor's Lady Swings Through South County Receptions, Teas



THREE SOUTH COUNTY RECEPTIONS and a luncheon in Livermore kept the governor's lady on the move this past Tuesday. A brunch was held at the Robert L. Coate home. Coate is chairman of the State Central Democratic Committee. Wearing a beige silk rajah tweed suit, Mrs. Edmund G. Brown (at piano) appeared fresh and charming all day despite a rugged schedule. Mrs. Adele Levine of Fremont Regional Democratic committee wore avocado green silk and Kimi Fuji donned a beige and an apricot-ring scarf. An early evening reception in Fremont was attended by Mrs. Brown before she left for Southern California.

(Bordanaro-Zarcone Photos)

VILLAGE PIONEER - MARCH 15TH
1966
ANN GOES TRAVELING

A Visit to the State Capitol Building

By ANN JOLLEY

If anyone had told me a week before (even by reading the tea leaves in my tea cup) that I would be in the State Capitol Building Feb. 8, sitting in the office of Assemblyman Carlos Bee, and drinking coffee with Speaker of the House Jesse Unruh, I wouldn't have believed it. Particularly the part about being flown to Sacramento and back by private plane, an Aero Commander, belonging to someone I had never met.

But this happened to me and seven other East Bay women, (all of the Democratic Party persuasion.) We met at 8:45 am, by the tower at Hayward Airport, and were introduced to each other by the two leaders of our little party, Kimi Fujii, co-chairman of the Ninth Congressional District of the State Central Committee, and Adele Levine, also a member of the S.C.C. The others were: Ann Herlihy, San Leandro; Ann Ramey, Pleasanton; Jean Wagner, Hayward; Adele McHale, Fremont and Pat Hillis of Hayward.

Feeling a little apprehensive, since I had never flown in anything with less than four engines, I was reassured to learn that this was no hot rod, but had cost one quarter of a million dollars, and had \$150,000 worth of radar equipment aboard. I felt even better when I heard that this same plane and pilot had flown Mrs. Robert Kennedy and Governor Edmund Brown, among other public figures.

We had been told that the plane was completely at our disposal, and we toyed with the idea of changing our destination to South America, but this seemed a little irresponsible for such serious-minded women Democrats.

Flying at 6,000 feet and looking down on fog most of the way, we were in Sacramento in half an hour, where we were met at the airport by two cars and taken directly to the Capitol Building.

First we visited Assemblyman Carlos Bee, and while enjoying coffee in his very comfortable office, Jesse Unruh, Speaker of the House, came by and was introduced to us. He and Carlos Bee were interested to find out how the people back home were reacting to the new Governor and the changes he was bringing about. We found this question was uppermost in the minds of all we met there.

Roll call sounded - a new innovation - so, clutching our Assembly California Legislature guest cards, we attended a meeting of the Assembly, which is something I had always intended to do, but probably never would have had it not been for this wonderful opportunity.

A number of bills were introduced, but I learned they couldn't be acted upon until 31 days after their introduction. A few others were voted upon and passed unanimously. What impressed me most was the streamlined way in which the meeting was conducted. It went fast, something like half an hour, but was not rushed, and I found it a pleasure to watch the professionals at work, especially Carlos Bee, who, as Speaker pro Tempore, a position he has held for a number of years, was responsible for conducting the proceedings.

We went to call on Robert Crown, Chairman of Ways and Means, who gave us a warm welcome, and when we attempted to leave he asked us to stay for a while so he could "pick our brains."

Back to the office of Carlos Bee, who along with Frank Keefer, his admin. asst., took us to lunch at the "Posey's", which is a regular eating place for many of the legislators.

In the afternoon we visited Senator Nick Petris, and settled down in his office for a very interesting and enlightening conversation. He had just finished a four and a half page letter to a woman who had written finding fault with the Welfare Program. He said her letter was so full of misconceptions that he just had to explain it to her point by point, and although he was sure he had lost a vote, he felt it his duty to point out the true facts. I was surprised just how important communication with the people is to all of our elected officials.

Finally we repaired once more to the office of Carlos Bee, where he allowed us to hold a little meeting of our own while he attended a conference. When he returned later to find us still absorbed in our discussion, he said, "I am now holding a meeting in a small annex and we are sitting on the floor because there are no chairs, but it's all right." What a gentleman!

For the return trip I was lucky enough to occupy the co-pilot's seat, which the pilot assured me was "the best seat in the house." By now, I was really enjoying myself and didn't want the day to end. It was a rare experience, as if a big bird were carrying us, not moving but just hovering between the fog and bright sunshine, while above us was our own private rainbow, which certainly could not be seen from the ground. Of course we weren't hovering; we were travelling at around 250 miles per hour ground speed.

As we came in to land at Hayward Airport, the pilot, Roy Fey, who would have been Hollywood's choice as perfect type-casting for a young debonaire pilot, casually remarked that he had told the boys in the flight tower that he was bringing in Miss America. At this, none of the women wanted to get out of the plane first, and everybody tried to look as casual and unconcerned as possible. Finally, however, we broke down and waved towards the fellows in the tower - after all, it was the pilot who would have to answer to them.



The buffet table intrigued this group of Democratic leaders. From the left are Bill Lockyer, first assistant to Robert Crown, 14th District assemblyman; Annis Rock

of San Leandro, Senator Nicholas Petris, Kimi Fujii of Hayward, chairman for day.

Democratic Women Plan Big Luncheon

Assemblywoman March K. Fong of Oakland and wives of area and state leaders of the Democratic Party will be honored guests April 7 at a luncheon sponsored by the area Women's Division of the Democratic Party.

Invitations to the luncheon, planned at historic Meek estate in San Lorenzo, have been mailed to some 500 women in Southern Alameda County.

In addition to Mrs. Fong, honored guests will include Mrs. Charles Warren, wife of the chairman of the Democratic State Central Committee; and Mrs. Robert Coate of Castro Valley, wife of the central committee's Northern California chairman.

Also scheduled to be honored are Mrs. George P. Miller of Alameda and Mrs. Don Edward of San Jose, wives of area con-

gressmen; Mrs. Nicholas C. Petris of Oakland, wife of State Sen. Petris, and Mrs. Carlos Bee of Hayward, wife of Assemblyman Bee.

Women's Division officials in attendance will include Mrs. R. E. Fowle, chairman of the Women's Division of the Democratic State Central Committee, and Mrs. Robert Danforth, Northern California women's chairman.

Mrs. Kimi Fujii of Hayward is general chairman of the luncheon. She will be assisted by Mrs. Raymond Baker, Mrs. Jack Hillis and Mrs. Albert Lepore of Hayward; Mrs. Jack Connor of Castro Valley; Mrs. James Ramey, representing Pleasanton - Livermore; Mrs. James Herlihy of San Leandro, and Mrs. Samuel Levine and Mrs. William Vandenburg of Fremont.

- Chall: Mainly you were in charge of it.
- Fujii: Fortunately, for me, I could just ask Adele, "Could you do something about this?" and she'd say, "Oh, yes, give me a fistful of tickets and I'll sell them." She had a style about her. I guess she still operates this way. She'd say, "Will you come to a cocktail party at my house before the dinner?" Everyone wants to go to a cockatil party. "Okay." "The tickets are ten dollars apiece." [Laughter] But there's a lot of expenditure on their own part, you see, to attract people to these functions. I really have to credit them, these gals, a lot. Really, its been very, very unselfish on their parts.
- Chall: Many of them are still going, aren't they? I don't remember Rita Strong. I don't think I've seen or heard of her.
- Fujii: She was Carlos Bee's secretary in Sacramento and later his assistant in the Hayward (Thirteenth Assembly District) office. She got married and she moved away. The others, you see--most of them had children in grade school, so they were at home. So this was a good thing for them, I guess. As soon as the kids got older, they went on their own. Became more liberated and assertive, shall we say?
- Chall: Adele, I think is on the, what is it, the county committee? Or was.
- Fujii: Yes, Adele however is now teaching at a local college [San Jose State University] and isn't so active politically any more. Rita Vandenburg was another great one and still is.
- Chall: Yes, Rita is a real mover. Very good. We've got a good district here--hard working people.
- Fujii: Outstanding district.

California Democratic Council Endorsing Convention, 1964

- Chall: Your first exposure to real agonizing pressures in the Democratic party, I guess, came then in 1964, when you went to the convention. Did you go to the CDC meeting in '64? You've said you didn't go very much after the first year or two, but I was just wondering whether you had gone to this one? When Alan Cranston, James Roosevelt, and Stanley Mosk, and Clair Engle were all trying to get the endorsement of the CDC.
- Fujii: I may have been to that meeting. Wasn't Clair Engle sick at the time?

- Chall: He was, and he called by telephone.
- Fujii: Oh, I remember that! It was awful.
- Chall: Yes, I understand it was just very, very upsetting to the delegates.
- Fujii: Oh, I remember that. How could I forget? All of us were just sick.
- Chall: Then I guess it was the decision of the group not to support Clair Engle; he was too ill. I'm sure that the leaders had probably decided that sometime before. Then there was the nominating and voting on Alan Cranston and James Roosevelt. Do you remember where your loyalties and interests were then? Whether there was any pressure put on you to vote a certain way.
- Fujii: Now was this for the chairmanship of the CDC?
- Chall: No, this was for the endorsement to run for Senate in Engle's place.
- Fujii: I supported Alan Cranston, at that time. There wasn't any pressure, but there was a lot of mutual respect for him in the area, in our area, and so, you just sort of get together and vote and decide. You don't even decide. It was already agreed on among the group that he would be their choice. I know I supported him at the time.
- Chall: And were you surprised when Pierre Salinger came on board as a candidate?
- Fujii: Yes, I wasn't very happy that he decided to come in to run. I didn't think it was very fair. I wasn't very sure of his qualifications, either. I felt that if anybody deserved it, it was Alan Cranston.

Delegate to the Democratic National Convention, 1964

- Chall: When you were put on the delegate list, did you expect that you would be going as a delegate? Did you have a feeling that because you were co-chairman of the Ninth Congressional District at the time you would be asked?
- Fujii: I expressed an interest in going. I think Carlos put in a good word for me. Roger Kent also did. Roger said to me later, "You know, you were just perfect. You were a party worker and you contributed to the party." Not a lot of money but certainly I contributed a little bit, I guess. "And you're a member of a minority. You're a woman. So you're just perfect!" [Laughter] "You cover so many bases."

- Chall: An ideal delegate. I notice that from this area, Eulalia Anderson also went. We haven't talked about Eulalia yet. Did you have much contact with her? She was in Castro Valley and you were operating out of Hayward, so I don't know whether you did. She was also one of the old-time women Democrats.
- Fujii: She was a member of the Eighth Congressional Women, the perennial treasurer. She was very good at handling money, as you probably know. She ran the headquarters quite well. Many times, Castro Valley, and Hayward, and San Lorenzo were under one headquarters, and she played a prominent role in the management of them. She was very dedicated, obviously.
- Chall: Yes. Yes. I knew her only in her later years. It's always hard to tell sometimes what kind of vigor and ability a person brings to a post, when you meet them late in their lives.
- Fujii: She was a hard taskmaster, especially in raising money. We've got to have it, and then she would hang on to it; I mean she wouldn't let us spend it. She didn't want us to spend what she thought might be an excessive amount toward things she didn't think were so important. She was always for helping candidates and she said that's what we're raising money for, which was true. Sometimes us younger girls used to think that maybe Eulalia didn't like young women in the party. [Laughter] But that was just our attitude. But she had our respect.
- Chall: She went to the convention in 1964, also.
- Fujii: Yes. We were roommates, as a matter of fact.
- Chall: Did you have one of those rooms where the plumbing was falling apart?
- Fujii: No. We had a room that was satisfactory.
- Chall: I've read some rather startling things about the hotel.
- Fujii: I was hearing about these from other people. Thank goodness, we didn't have any trouble with our particular room.
- Chall: There were only nineteen women, as you may recall, out of the total delegation of 160, which was about par for the course then. Twelve to thirteen or fourteen percent was just about what it was until 1972 when the McGovern rules brought about quite a change. Otherwise, there were not many. Were you conscious of this at that time? How very few women there were?
- Fujii: No, not really. First of all, when I was told that I could go, I remember Van Dempsy said to me, "Well, if you've got \$150 for



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Among 174 Members . . .

STATE PRO-JOHNSON DEMOCRATIC DELEGATION INCLUDES TWO NISEI

The 174-member California Democratic presidential primary delegation, officially uncommitted but strongly pro-Johnson, will include two nisei delegates.

Kimiko Fujii of Hayward and Sam Ishihara of Los Angeles were among those on the list filed last

Friday in Sacramento, according to Charles Warren, state Democratic chairman.

The delegation is headed by state Atty. Gen. Thomas C. Lynch and includes ex-Gov. Edmund G. Brown and Mayor Joseph A. Alioto of San Francisco.

Miss Fujii, a director of the 1st District Agricultural assn. and a member of the Hayward human relations commission, was named from the 9th congressional district which overlaps southern Alameda county and eastern Santa Clara county.

Also Delegate in 1964

Appointed twice to the agricultural association, she had served as president several years ago for this group which annually presents the California Garden Show and Exposition in Oakland.

She has also been active among Democratic women's organizations in Alameda county.

Miss Fujii was also on the official Democratic delegation for Johnson four years ago and cast an electoral college vote for Johnson. Two nisei were also on the 1964 delegation, the other being Taul Watanabe of Los Angeles.

A life-long nisei Democrat whose clothing business in Watts on Central av. was wiped out in the 1965 riots, Ishihara is a 10-year member on the board of directors of the Urban League's Los Angeles chapter.

The 54-year old youth volunteer and Japanese American Optimist club member was born in Yoko-

(Continued on last page)

Tuesday, March 12, 1968

All The Way Daily News 4/1/68

Ever since President Johnson announced he was sacrificing political ambition for peace, some of his California backers have been on the verge of revolution.

But, at least until April 19, this area's delegates and alternates on the Democratic presidential delegation headed by Attorney General Thomas Lynch plan to stand pat. That decision was made last Wednesday night at a meeting in Inglewood.

At the meeting from Southern Alameda County were Kimi Fujii of Hayward and Carl Martinneau of Fremont, both alternates on the delegation. A pair of mayors on the delegation — Jack Maltestor of San Leandro and Jack Smith of Hayward — were kept in the county by a mayor's conference.

"I'm pro-Johnson and I'll stay with the Lynch delegation until we decide otherwise, said Miss Fujii. "The delegation is a very strong delegation and there weren't any real signs of defection at the meeting," she adds.

How did she react to Johnson's "I will not seek and I will not accept" announcement?

"It was a surprise to me. It was quite a sacrifice on his part for peace."

Miss Fujii, who was a delegate to the 1964 Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City, showed no eagerness to hop to another candidate. "It's not important to me who goes to the convention," she said. "I'll support whoever wins the nomination. I don't have to jump on any bandwagons."

Fujii: registration, Kimi, then you can go." [Laughs]

Chall: I was going to ask you about that.

Fujii: "That's for registration," he said. "Now, who wants to pay that much? But if you want to go...." It was put to me that way. I said I'd like to go. Then we had to pay for our trip and our hotel rooms. So. it was quite expensive.

If I wasn't single and if I hadn't saved a little money, I wouldn't have been able to go. Most people about my age had families. It's not an easy thing to go.

Chall: Women really don't ~~and didn't~~ have money of their own in those days, at least not that much. It's a good point.

Fujii: At that time, you see. Unless some kind person had a fund raiser for you; but in those days they didn't do that too often. I'm not aware of it, anyway. They do now, I know.

Chall: Oh, do they?

Fujii: In the last convention in Kansas City -- was it Kansas City? No --

Chall: In New York.

Fujii: No. [Pause] In Miami, I'm sorry. For that one, I remember going to a couple of fund raisers for the individual delegates.

Chall: That was in 1972.

Chall: Yes. I think the party took responsibility more for making sure people could get there.

Fujii: There was greater representation of the grassroots people, which was better.

Chall: You think that's a good idea?

Fujii: Yes, I think so.

Chall: Prior to your going to the convention, the delegates met. Their main job was to choose the national committeeman and the national committeewoman. Do you remember what was going on there with Eugene Wyman, who was replacing Stanley Mosk and Carmen Warschaw, who wanted to replace Elizabeth Gatov?

Fujii: I certainly do. [Laughter] The telegrams that we were getting from Carmen from Torrance, California. I'd never heard of Torrance

Fujii: until I started getting telegrams from her.

Chall: Torrance? Was Carmen Warschaw sending telegrams to you?

Fujii: She was. I think she was sending them to all the delegates. Asking for support. I think I might have gotten two of them.

Chall: I see. Well, I have one letter. She sent that one to all the delegates outlining her background and her position.

Fujii: I might have her telegram.

Chall: If you can find anything in your scrapbook, it would be great to have it. I have her letter which was sent out March eighteenth and then there's a letter on March twenty from Governor Brown, welcoming all of you as delegates and asking you to support, with him, Eugene Wyman and Elizabeth Gatov. On June 17, a telegram came out to the delegates -- I would guess all the delegates, I don't really know -- from all of the congressmen, the California Democratic congressmen, urging support for Carmen Warschaw.

Fujii: Oh, I remember that one. That was really the year, I was such an innocent little thing. Deluged by all this attention. It was a bit overwhelming. [Laughter]

Chall: What did you do about it?

Fujii: I supported Elizabeth Gatov.

Chall: You knew her by this time, I guess.

Fujii: Yes.

Chall: Was there any particular reason for supporting her? Were you contacted by her or by someone to make sure she had the votes?

Fujii: The only time I saw her was in the ladies' room and I had a Gatov button on, and she thanked me. [Laughs] I don't recall receiving a call from her directly, but I know Carlos asked me to support her. No, wait a minute. No, I shouldn't say that because Carmen was a very good friend of Carlos. I know Roger Kent was for her, for Elizabeth. It became almost a north/south issue. We northerners, people north of the Tehachapis would sort of stick together.

[end tape 3, side 1; begin tape 3, side 2]

Chall: Did you have a feeling that, besides just the north and south division and the comradeship or loyalties that perhaps result from location, that it had something to do with pro and con, Jesse Unruh and Pat Brown?

Fujii: There again, you're north/south.

Chall: That's right.

Fujii: I know that we were great supporters of Pat Brown here in the north. I don't think it was just because he was from San Francisco necessarily. Well, maybe it was. But we would have supported Elizabeth Gatov, I'm quite sure.

Chall: She did win. I was just wondering how much all of these letters and telegrams -- how much good they did. Of course, when you're running a campaign, you do everything you can. Probably pick up some votes here and there, and lose a few.

Fujii: Carmen had a style. She would just do this anyway, I think, hoping to pick up maybe one more vote along the way. I don't know how else she would do it.

Racial Issues

Chall: Now, when you got to the convention, you also had some problems, I understand, in the delegation, and it was over the seating of the Mississippi Freedom Delegation. What was that like?

Fujii: There were demonstrations outside. Of course, we had to vote within our delegation. I voted for the seating of the black delegation.

Chall: The whole Mississippi Freedom Delegation?

Fujii: Yes.

Chall: So you didn't accept the compromise, then.

Fujii: I did eventually. But I stood up with Phil Burton....

Chall: Who?

Fujii: Phil Burton, and Congressman Edwards. There must have been just a sprinkling of us voting that way at that time. Mrs. Anderson, Eulalia, was telling me "Sit down." I told her, "I'm voting this way because somebody has to speak out for them." I could only think of the days when I was in camps during World War II. All of a sudden, this feeling, this fear again, struck me. My gosh. I almost voted with the majority; then I realized what I'd be doing. You vote with the masses sometimes, just when you're not thinking. I'm certainly glad I voted as I did.

- Chall: I guess there was a great deal of tension within the delegation itself. It was Carmen Warschaw and Jesse Unruh, Jerome Waldie, and a number of others, Ann Eliaser, also, who voted for the seating of the Mississippi Freedom Delegation. As I understand it, you'd been instructed as a delegation by the Democratic State Central Committee, to vote for the freedom delegation, to seat them. That had been an instruction before you left. Do you recall that?
- Fujii: Yes, I do.
- Chall: So you went, more or less instructed by the party.
- Fujii: Then the others didn't vote according to the party.
- Chall: I think what happened is that when they got there, the powers that be in the convention itself, including I believe, President Johnson, came up with the compromise to seat two members of the Mississippi Freedom Delegation with the understanding that in 1968, the delegation had to be democratically selected. That was the compromise. Now, there were still in the California delegation some who did not go along with that compromise. I've seen caucus figures of forty-nine and fifty-four but I don't know when these votes were taken.
- Fujii: Well, I went along with that compromise because there was so much turmoil in the convention. We felt in some instances that there wouldn't be any convention. It was really quite an issue. There was a demonstration going on outside. It was a little frightening. I thought that since they decided that in the next, the '68 election, they would be democratically selected I could vote finally with the majority.
- Chall: I see.
- Fujii: I don't think I compromised my principles so much.
- Chall: The whole tension based on race gave you quite a start then?
- Fujii: Oh, yes.
- Chall: That was a rather difficult way to start your role in the national convention.
- Fujii: It was interesting too. Then there was talk within our delegation. "Now the Mexicans are going to start demanding things," down in southern California.
- Chall: Were they saying that within the delegation?
- Fujii: Within the delegation.

Chall: Is that so?

Fujii: Yes. "Now it's going to be the Mexicans, because they're already making noises in southern California." It was just interesting to hear. Somehow or other -- here I've been a victim of prejudice and so forth, and many people have -- but I didn't even know there was prejudice against Jews until I went out to the Midwest, or Polish people, or whatever. I just thought it was against Japanese.

Chall: And then found out that everybody has a prejudice about somebody.
[Laughter]

Fujii: Then, of course, I became a delegate. It just made me more conscious of the world out there. People had to be helped. I was wondering when the Mexican movement was going to take off; I guess it gradually did.

Chall: It did. I think in another few years.

Fujii: It didn't take long.

Chall: The Mexican groups were picketing outside of a Democratic State Central Committee meeting -- I think it was in '71. Just a couple of years later. That was over the issue of reapportionment because they wanted a district; then they could have a sure seat.

Fujii: There weren't too many Mexicans....

Chall: On your delegation?

Fujii: No.

Chall: No, I guess not.

Fujii: I don't think I noticed many.

Chall: I'll have to check over that list, but Mr. Roybal might have been one of the few.

Fujii: Oh, yes, he was there.

Chall: And how many blacks were there?

Fujii: I don't know. From this area, I really don't know.

Chall: Not many.

Fujii: It would be interesting to find out. You'd have to go over the list.

Chall: I have the list, but I don't see many minorities. Mr. Song.

Fujii: He's Korean.

Chall: There may have been only a couple Orientals. You and Mr. Song, that I recall. Mr. Rumford. Was he there?

Fujii: Yes, he was.

Chall: So there was a sprinkling of minority people, even though I'm sure minorities must have been at work somewhere in the districts, particularly in Los Angeles.

Fujii: There weren't too many yet. I don't feel that there were. I didn't belong to any of the Oakland clubs or didn't go to any of their functions, at that time. Mervyn Dymally must have been there....

Chall: And [Augustus] Hawkins. I know that you felt -- at least this is what I got from reading one of your press releases -- that in your work with the party and in your other civic activities, you had an opportunity to enable people to understand about other races. But what could you do in situations of this kind where you felt there was overt prejudice -- when people were talking about next time it will be the Mexicans? Were you able ever to say anything that you felt would have some effect?

Fujii: I don't think I did. Somehow I didn't like to ruffle people too much because I thought time would take care of it, of the situation. At least I felt I would be there as a supporter, if anything should happen, negatively that is. I don't think I was outspoken. I'm not really a banner-carrying person. I'm more on the low-key level, I guess.

Chall: Except for that very exciting episode, I guess the convention was pretty much cut and dried with the nomination of Lyndon Johnson and Hubert Humphrey.

Fujii: Oh, yes. Terribly cut and dried. There were some highlights. I think Jacqueline Kennedy was there. There was a reception for her, but I gave my ticket to my sister Hanako. I decided, well, I might as well have everybody in the family enjoy it. [Laughs]

Chall: How did your sister happen to be there?

Fujii: She was working in Philadelphia, and Atlantic City is very close, so she spent the night with me. Mrs. Anderson was very nice. She let the kids come. I had two nieces come in. They had their sleeping bags and they slept on the floor. So, I was trying to share the experience with members of the family.

Fujii: Bobby Kennedy and Ethel Kennedy were there. I remember them up in the balcony when they had pictures of Jack Kennedy and his life. They had a film.

Chall: That was quite moving, I understand.

Fujii: Oh, I should say so. They had a spotlight on Bobby, and Teddy, and Ethel Kennedy. I don't remember the others. There must have been the children, I guess.

I remember one funny little incident with my niece...I had to go to a caucus and so I said she could go to this luncheon, or this tea. And she came back and said, "I had to give up my seat for some old lady." The next morning, she was reading the paper and she said, "Do you know who that old lady was?" She said, "It was Perle Mesta." [Laughter] But they're just little incidents I remember.

Chall: How old was your niece at that time?

Fujii: She must have been about fourteen. It was very exciting because you saw people that you'd read about in the newspapers. There was Adam Clayton Powell, a very colorful figure at that time. Many of the congressmen, the governor of Michigan, "Soapy" Williams. The bow tie with the spots on it. Because of that, it was just dazzling to a person like me; well, anybody would be affected by it. I think it's the excitement of it all that attracts people to these conventions, besides the issues. But sometimes they overshadowed the issues.

Chall: The excitement overshadows the issues?

Fujii: Inasmuch as we didn't really have a lot of issues, except that the Vietnam War which I thought was just terrible, at that time was coming into the picture.

Chall: So when you came back, you went to work on the regular campaign trail, the way you usually did?

Fujii: Yes.

Chall: At that time, the right wing, partially supported I guess, by the John Birch Society, was coming along and people like Don Edwards and Carlos Bee, to some extent, were getting opposition which they hadn't had before. At least Don Edwards had some rather tough opposition.

Fujii: Oh yes. I recall that. At least one man from Fremont, John Stevenson. I think, down in San Jose, he's had opposition, but I don't think he has any opposition any more. He's so popular. An excellent congressman.

Chall: That takes care of 1964. We began to get the rumbles of the Vietnam

Chall: War, in 1965.

More on the State Central Committee

Chall: You were on the executive committee of the state central committee in 1965.

Fujii: Yes, I was.

Chall: There was some concern at the December, 1965 meeting. Trudy Owens was planning to bring in a motion to remove the CDC from the executive committee of the state central committee. Apparently Bob Coate had asked her not to bring this up, but when Simon Casady did get up in the meeting to give his report, Carmen Warschaw and twenty others -- I read -- walked out. Do you remember that?

Fujii: Yes I recall now. I remember Trudy Owens was going to do this, but I don't remember their walking out.

Chall: Do you remember that as something that was disturbing to the executive committee?

Fujii: Yes, it was. It was disturbing. We thought it was going to break up the party again, further. Because there was always this schism, the north/south, as it was, and they were always battling for money or wondering where the money was going to come from, certainly. It was felt there had to be more money going into the coffers or the party couldn't function. Anything that would disturb the status quo would keep money away. It would go in some other directions. At least that's the way I felt.

Chall: Did you feel that Bob Coate handled some of these tough issues well?

Fujii: Yes.

Chall: Was he a strong chairman?

Fujii: I thought he was a very strong chairman. Very able. Maybe I'm prejudiced but I really did. He was very good.

Chall: You hadn't been in the state central committee for all of the ten years that Roger Kent was operating there, but did you see a difference in their style?

Fujii: Oh, yes. Bob was more decisive. Roger Kent is a very gentle person; tried to keep everybody happy. I don't know whether I was in the

- Fujii: state central committee when he was chairman or not. I don't think so.
- Chall: Let's see, you went on in '62. He was state chairman from '64 to '65; he was northern division chairman from '62 to '64.
- Fujii: I guess I did know him then. He was effective, in the sense that he had a great feeling for people and issues and we knew he had contact with people in Washington. He had friends all over the United States, which is an asset to the party, to California. I don't think he had any enemies. He's just such a wonderful person, and encouraged people. He was a very friendly person, also. I've always enjoyed my relationship with him. He always seemed to be a man who knew everything -- the inside. He had the inside track. [Laughter] You listen to him when he talks to you. He'd even know who the next candidate was going to be. It was going to be Stevenson. I hadn't heard of Stevenson at the time, but it was going to be Stevenson.
- Chall: He already knew it.
- Fujii: He was sort of a godlike person. I think I mentioned that Ann Eliaser has felt indebted to him for her interest in the party and her progress.
- Chall: In terms of style, the two of them were different. I guess they were all different when you think of Charles Warren, Roger Boas, and Charles Manatt, you've seen them all, haven't you?
- Fujii: Yes. Mr. Boas, he was nothing, as far as I'm concerned. I don't know how it was that he ever became chairman. He really was not qualified. He had no background as far as I could see. His claim to notoriety was as moderator of World Press on TV Channel 9. Eugene Wyman was excellent, of course. Brilliant man. Charles Warren was a very calm type of person. He was all right, but I didn't think he was very dynamic. But Charles Manatt is the hardest-working chairman I have ever met. He still is chairman, isn't he?
- Chall: I think he just went out in January.
- Fujii: He's young and he brought a lot of life to the party. He may have been ruthless, but I don't know. Some people have said that he was, but...I think he did a lot for the party. People like Bill Lockyer and he were very good friends. It was that age group. Of course, Bill's older than Charles. Charles believed in going out to the districts, and he really did it. I know when I was chairman he came out certain times to the area. I think he's a lawyer, but he did spend a lot of time with getting to know people throughout the

- Fujii: state, north and south. He even came to several southern Alameda County events.
- Chall: That's a big order.
- Fujii: Really. He had meetings in San Francisco for district chairmen several times during the year, just for the chairmen, so they could meet with him.
- Chall: Were those the co-chairmen?
- Fujii: Co-chairmen, plus counties and others. I don't think there's anybody who's worked as hard as he.
- Chall: What about some of the northern people like Joe Holsinger. We talked about Jack Brooks the last time, but Joe Holsinger has been active for many years.
- Fujii: He didn't make any impression on me, I'm sorry to say. Eleanor [Fowle] worked very hard. Being Alan Cranston's sister, too, I think she felt she wanted to help the party, because you feel a deeper obligation if it's to help the family. She was a very dedicated women's division chairman. She felt women had to have their say in government; not just raise money. She would say they only want us to raise money. That's all they want us to do -- to do the menial work. [Laughs]
- Chall: But stay in the background. I was interested in Adele Leopold. Do you recall her as chairman of the women's division?
- Fujii: Adele Leopold? No, I'm sorry, I don't recall what she did, but I do remember her as being a very glamorous-looking person. This year, with Roger Boas and Adele Leopold is a blank to me.
- Chall: I see. You might have been doing something else, too.
- Fujii: I was very fond of Eleanor Fowle as northern chairman of the women's division, and there was just not enough we could all do for Eleanor. I guess Adele Leopold was from the south anyway wasn't she?
- Chall: Yes, she would have been. It's just interesting to know what people do recall. I don't know whether we talked last time about the meeting at which Elizabeth Gatov resigned and Ann Eliaser got the position as Democratic National Committeewoman.
- Fujii: I don't think we did.
- Chall: All I know is that Carmen Warschaw had hoped that Trudy Owens or someone else might be put into the position.

- Fujii: Ah, yes. Carmen and Trudy were very close friends. Trudy was always supporting Carmen. I don't think Carmen could have a better ally than Trudy. I don't even remember Trudy running for anything.
- Chall: Well, I don't know that she ever did. I don't know that she ever had an opportunity, but I believe that Carmen Warschaw had hoped that when Elizabeth Gatov resigned, that maybe they could get Trudy Owens in there as a national committeewoman rather than Ann Eliaser. However, the party had it all set up for Ann Eliaser. Do you remember the election?
- Fujii: Yes, I remember that election itself, but I supported Ann Eliaser. You sort of make up your mind you're going to do it. Again, it's a north/south question.
- Chall: And you knew her by then, too, well enough.
- Fujii: Yes.
- Chall: I guess the friendship ties are very crucial here, too.
- Fujii: Oh, yes. The loyalties within the party are very strong once they've been built. And she's close. Why should I support somebody clear down in Los Angeles? I don't know if she'd do anything for the Ninth Congressional District or care.
- Chall: That is important. What about the 1966 election between Carmen Warschaw and Charles Warren for the chairman of the party?
- Fujii: I supported Charles Warren. Partly because Carlos Bee instructed us too. Me, he instructed me. [Laughter]
- Chall: How was that worked?
- Fujii: Charlie Warren was assemblyman at the time, and he rounded up his support from members of the assembly. So, you know, the feelers go out and I was tapped by Carlos.
- Chall: If you had wanted to support Carmen Warschaw for any reason, would you have done that even if you had been asked by Carlos Bee not to? Or would you generally expect to do what your party leaders asked of you?
- Fujii: I usually voted according to what Carlos would suggest. I don't think I ever voted against him, his wishes. But, after all, I felt loyalty to Carlos. He did appoint me to the state central committee. He also saw that I was appointed to the California Spring Garden Show by the governor. You were obligated, you see, whether you like it or not. You feel a certain amount of loyalty and obligation.

Fujii: Because I see it at this level, I feel it must happen more, all the way from Washington on down, even. It's just a microcosm here of what goes on from what people tell me, I think.

Chall: I presume you're right.

Fujii: In most instances, I voted according to the way Carlos was instructing. He would give me a good reason to, 'cause I'd argue with him.

Chall: If you weren't sure what he was asking you to do, you knew him well enough to argue about the issue. He'd bear you no ill will about it?

Fujii: Heavens, no. We were good friends.

Chall: That was quite an election because Carmen Warschaw lost by only four votes. There must have been a considerable amount of pressure prior to that meeting; not during it.

Fujii: I didn't feel it too much.

Chall: I see. I just wondered how much you were aware of.

Fujii: Not too much. I think people always knew what I was going to do. Oftentimes these people would approach the person who appointed you, and you'd see the pressure that way. Carlos had already given his decision, so don't waste time on her, you know. [Laughter]

Chall: What else can you tell me before we go into your work, on the boards and commissions and with the AC transit district? Is there anything else about the party you'd want to add?

Fujii: About the party itself?

Chall: Yes. About working in the party.

Fujii: I have gradually cut back on my work with the party. My job as president of AC Transit for two years pretty much took care of any other activity for me -- with the exception of the Hayward Public Service Commission and the Hayward Centennials Committee.

[end tape 3, side 2; begin tape 4, side 1]

The Women's Division

Fujii: Are you interested in the women's group?

Chall: Let me ask you about the women's division. There has been a considerable amount of debate lately about whether or not there should be a separate women's division. Because after all since women are supposed to be equal to men they, therefore, should be equal to men in the party, so maybe, the argument runs, we should do away with the women's division entirely. And if not do away with the division at least allow the women to do something other than just raising money. Do you think you would have been active politically if there hadn't been a women's club for you to move into it first?

Fujii: The women would not have been active had there not been such an organization. That club gave me an opportunity, then, to meet and work with women on an equal basis. I think if it were a mixed club that wouldn't have been so. It's just like when the Hayward Democratic Club was organized, you already felt yourself in a secondary place; not equal with the men. I don't know why. They play two roles. Isn't that strange? At least that's the way I felt.

I think there's an absolute need for the women's division. I really do, because I think other women would be intimidated by just working in the party where there are just men and women together. It's not easy to work with the men. The personalities of many of these men are just impossible and women need to encourage each other. In that way, they become more conscious or aware of the political system. I think it definitely has its place in the party. The men think now there shouldn't be a separate women's division, but I think they just never liked us anyway.

Chall: Do you think they'd bring women in on an equal basis if there were no women's division? There was a relationship of 50/50 in the central committee and with district cochairmen -- there was always a man and a woman; also on the Democratic National Committee. Even on the platform committees of the national conventions, I understand that at one time -- this may still be true -- there was always a man and a woman from each state on the various committees. Does that make any difference? Do you think that because the 50/50 division is required, this provides women an opportunity for influence in the party?

Fujii: I don't think so. No. You have to be a very special woman to get yourself heard, and you're blocked out anyway. You have to be very, very special and know how to maneuver your way into the group, I think. Times have changed certainly, since even ten years ago, and the women's movement is taking hold. I mean the women's movement, and the equal rights amendment, and so forth. But I do feel we need to have the women's division yet. But not on this tea bit. Not on that. The women entering politics are very able, intelligent, aware of issues and still need the backing of other women.

Chall: Where would you want it to focus its activities?

Fujii: I think they should welcome women into the party, of course, and into the Democratic movement, and educate people into the structure of the party. Get them involved in helping others. Just like what the women are doing now in the women's movement. What is it they're doing up here at the center, the Women's Center? Helping them become more liberated. I think it's just something that has to be done to help women.

There's great potential in the women power. It's not that I expect them to take over the world but I think we have to have an opportunity to express ourselves and be heard. And I think maybe this is the first step toward equal recognition. Then, maybe later, about twenty years from now... [Laughter]

Women in Politics

Chall: What about women in the local organization who always staff the offices, run the campaigns, and help to get out the vote. Does that seem to be where they are most effective in party work?

Fujii: Right now?

Chall: Yes.

Fujii: It seems so to me. We've had some very capable campaign chairmen, especially Frances Adams who served as chairman of Charles Santana's campaign for supervisor and Ray Marsh's campaign for judge. Frances is an exceptionally hard-working person. I don't know whether she has political aspirations.

Chall: Have you seen women who could be just as effective in every area of party activity as some of the men you've seen?

Fujii: I think that they're capable and qualified, certainly, but they'll defer to the men if there are men there, working within the party. I've seen that happen in our own Hayward office. The women will take the lesser role and be very supportive of the men. It just seems still that you have to have a male in the front, the forefront, I guess.

Chall: As women try to get into public office, and onto boards and commissions, do you think they're going to have to be in businesses or careers which give them the same kind of entre into politics as men have? Is that the only way you think they'll be able to get

Chall: into the party and move up? By being lawyers or accountants or...?

Fujii: Right now, it seems you have to be a professional person, or a terribly exceptional housewife, I would say. It seems you have to be in a profession, some profession.

Chall: So actually, you think that it's the men who keep the women out of public office and out of candidacies, and out of special leadership roles in the party?

Fujii: Yes, I think so. Then, I think the women support the men.

Chall: You think women accept that role?

Fujii: Yes. If the women weren't so supportive of the men, this wouldn't happen.

Chall: Do you think women are supportive of the men because that's the role they've been taught?

Fujii: Yes, I think so. It will probably take a generation or two to pass out. [Laughter]

Chall: Do you think women bring now, and will bring something different into public offices if they are there in greater numbers? Getting elected to city councils, and boards of supervisors, and the state and national legislatures?

Fujii: Oh yes, I think they bring a greater sensitivity, certainly. In Hayward, for instance, Gail Steel. I think she's outstanding. Of course, our mayor [Ilene Weinreb] I think is more than outstanding, and we're so lucky to have her.

Chall: So you really feel they bring something to public office -- a special sensitivity?

Fujii: Yes.

Chall: To what?

Fujii: For instance, Gail has tried to get more people involved in city government, getting them more interested in city government; having local meetings, for instance, on crime prevention. Most people have been sitting at home thinking the police have to take care of us. Now she's awakened everybody to the fact that you can play a part in this. I think that's terribly important. At first, she was just getting involved in environmental issues and aggravating people. [Laughs] They just didn't understand. But she really is a great gal.

- Fujii: I can't think of anything else right now, but I think this community interest that she's aroused is just great. The cleanup, for instance. I think she's involved in that. It gets people more interested in city government, besides; the city becomes a part of them.
- Chall: Have you found that women are more emotional; they can't tolerate stress? That's one of the reasons that's given for not wanting women to handle campaigns, or to keep them out of public office. You've been now on a number of boards and commissions and also in party politics. Do you find that under heavy campaign pressures and issue pressures, that women break down faster than men?
- Fujii: No. Heavens, no. [Laughter]
- Chall: Just asking.
- Fujii: No, I don't think so. I certainly haven't seen any women who would break down like that under stress.
- Chall: It is claimed that they get too emotional; it's embarrassing to the men to find the women so emotional about things. Maybe they're more emotional about certain issues, I don't know.
- Fujii: That depends on what they mean by emotional. Do they cry, or do they scream, or do they just become so intensely involved that they can't think of anything but that one issue? I don't know, but I think many people are dedicated to some aspect of the party, or of the community. Maybe they'll work harder. I don't think we should call them terribly emotional people, detrimental.
- Chall: Do you think women do work harder than men do?
- Fujii: Yes, I certainly do.
- Chall: Not only in party work, but in any other public service work, you think they do?
- Fujii: I think they do. It's certainly an outlet for them if they've been at home, and a way to express themselves. There are many capable women out there who are stuck at home. They have an opportunity to do some good work, by participating in some worthwhile activity. They just give their all, I've noticed. I'm really glad. This woman power is certainly not to be laughed at. I think we're pretty special people, you know -- [laughs] given a chance.
- Chall: Have you been more aware of sex discrimination in the last number of years than you were, let's say, when you first began your party work?

Fujii: You mean in party work?

Chall: Yes.

Fujii: I was more aware of it in party work than on commissions.

Chall: On the commission it isn't as noticeable?

Fujii: I never noticed it really.

Chall: Well, that's interesting. Does it make you angry -- sex discrimination?

Fujii: Yes, it does. It didn't bother me at first because it didn't occur to me. Now that I'm made aware of it, it upsets me. I've been a single woman all my life and managed to make a few noteworthy accomplishments along the way. However I confess I really did not realize how mistreated many women have been.

Chall: Do you think that the women's movement will be a good thing, as it's moving along now, for men, and women, and children, let's say, and society at large. Is it a good thing?

Fujii: I think it's a good thing. Because we are all people and this role playing has just been too much. There shouldn't be role playing. After all, we're all individuals. We should have the opportunity to function as such.

Chall: You're for the E.R.A., then, I take it.

Fujii: Oh, yes.

Chall: Have you joined any of the other organizations, like the NOW [National Organization for Women]?

Fujii: And NWPC [National Women's Political Caucus].

Chall: Do you belong to NOW? What other organizations supporting women's issues -- Planned Parenthood for example?

Fujii: American Association of University Women.

Chall: You were a member of the Hayward Area League of Women Voters for many years. What was your interest in that organization, and how do you evaluate its effectiveness in the community?

Fujii: I was a member for only a few years. The members were very intelligent, devoted a lot of time and energy in observing city and county commission meetings, did a lot of intensive research on local

Fujii: and county issues, put out an amazingly detailed newsletter. Unfortunately, I didn't have the time to attend many of their meetings or get involved in their studies. I think the group has been effective in our community. They helped arouse the community for planned development, the need for green belt areas, sponsored candidates nights, kept the members aware of what was going on in the city and county commission and councils.

I know they urged strongly for the need for a Human Relation Commission in Hayward and succeeded.

Many times the league women are the only observers in attendance at local or county meetings where we need "watch-dogs." They seem to be a select group of intelligent, articulate, dedicated, educated women. It's no wonder they are listened to.



Fund raising cocktail party for Alan Cranston and Jack Smith. Left to right: Assemblyman Carlos Bee, Alan Cranston, Kimi Fujii, Jack Smith, Leonard Seeley. Hayward, California, 1964.



In the chambers of Judge George Phillips, with her mother watching, Kimi Fujii takes the oath of office as a member of the Alameda-Contra Costa Rapid Transit District, 1972.

III SERVING ON BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS, 1964-1977

Hayward Human Relations Commission, 1964-1973

Chall: You were appointed to the Hayward Human Relations Commission in 1964.

Fujii: Yes.

Chall: Are you still on it?

Fujii: Oh, no. I served ten years. That was a long time.

Chall: Who appointed you first?

Fujii: It was either George Oakes or John Pappas.

Chall: Was that when the commission was first organized?

Fujii: It wasn't actually a commission. It was a study group. We had to prove ourselves -- the necessity for having a human relations commission. It took about six months. We actively met, certainly, and we had to do a lot of research, and prove to the city council that there was a necessity for having a human relations commission. We had a couple of members on the council, who didn't think it was necessary to have a human relations commission. Tom Neveau was one. He happens to be one of my best friends now. At that time, I don't know why he was so much against it.

However, Ray Doran was the city manager at the time. I talked to him on the telephone and I was quite disturbed because I said, "You know, we really need a human relations commission in town and we can't get to Tom Neveau. He just won't listen." He said, "You know, Tom is one person who will listen to you. I, myself, have had experience working with Tom. If he doesn't agree with you, he will listen, and if he agrees, he'll vote for you." Someone finally got to Tom; I don't know who it was. He voted in favor of it. There

Fujii: was one more person, who wasn't for it. There were two people, two difficult people, and they were Republicans. At any rate, we had to prove to them that we were a necessity for the city of Hayward. Everybody thought this great cosmopolitan city doesn't need such a commission.

Chall: How many people were on the commission? I mean the study group.

Fujii: I think there were about twelve. Let's see, Stan Blackfield was one, and Norman Amundsen--he represented labor. Manuel Castro, also represented labor. Pearl Roche. I don't know whether she was representing the Republican women or not, but she was on it. It was an outstanding group: Father Lawrence Walsh (St. Joachim's Catholic Church), Bob Cohn, Reverend Joe M. Sandven, United Church of Hayward, and Leonard Lustig.

Chall: What did you do to bring about a realization, among yourselves, that the commission was needed?

Fujii: We tried to prove that there was prejudice in this city. First of all, in housing. ECHO [Eden Council for Hope and Opportunity], I know, would have members coming in. Lucie Buchbinder came quite often to prove to us, and we tried to prove to the city, that there were evidences of discrimination in housing. And also in labor--that is, minority hiring in the city of Hayward. In fact, Norm Amundsen and I met with Joe Vilardi. He's still personnel manager of the city of Hayward. We went over the names of people who were hired by the city and there were very few Spanish surname people. I don't think there were any Orientals. We didn't think that was very fair. There were some other issues that I can't remember exactly. We tried to prove that the Spanish-speaking people were more of the lower income group in Hayward.

Then we tried to get a population comparison of the Spanish-speaking and others, because we couldn't tell who the blacks were. Then we tried to prove that there was sort of a ghetto situation existing, because all the blacks were sent out to Kelly Hill, and the Spanish-speaking out toward Palma Ceia, and the Orientals out in the Tennyson area. I can't remember what else we did.

Stanley Blackfield was a great help. He's such a smart guy. Don't you like him?

Chall: I do.

Fujii: But I can't think of anything else.

Chall: That was quite a bit to start out proving. I recall sometime in the history of that Human Relations Commission when some groups were picketing, either picketing your commission meetings or picket-

Chall: ing the city. Do you remember that? I don't know what it was all about, but I remember some serious agitation in the city over this, and I think it was a human relations problem.

Fujii: Oh, I think my nephew was one of the picketing kids. [Laughter] But I can't remember exactly what it was all about. I kept a scrapbook of the early years of our formation. It's over there at the other house. I meant to go through it but I just didn't have a chance to.

Chall: Off the top of your head, what do you recall of significance about the committee and the working relationships of the people? This was a different experience for you from what you had had with the party. Now you're working on a real community problem. That is different from studying or lobbying an issue, or working on an election campaign.

Fujii: We worked in committees, and with the police and firemen. Of course, we were concerned about the police harrassing the Mexicans, or young people. Employment, of course -- the city of Hayward's employment problem. We thought it was a problem, but they still don't think it's a problem. I think one way they were able to cover up was the fact that they had an assistant personnel manager who had a Spanish surname. He subsequently went and got a job elsewhere.

We had some community meetings, I remember. We went into the areas and tried to pinpoint the problems of the areas. Nobody came to the meetings. Maybe one or two people. We tried to get the word out to people. Reverend Sandven was one of our members. He was a great one for having community meetings, district meetings, area meetings. That was really sad. [Laughs] But anyway, he said, "At least people know we had a meeting, whether they came or not." In a couple of years, we got Harold Moore as human relations coordinator, I think. He set up some conferences which were quite successful. We had a Catholic priest, Father Walsh from St. Joachim's. He was a good man. We also had another after he left. Then Father somebody from St. Clement's. I can't remember their names.

Chall: That's all right. Those are in the records, those names, if anyone wants them. They're public. The main thing for you is just to find out how you felt about what you were doing.

Fujii: We were spinning our wheels quite a bit. But now, I see, the commission has done a lot of work. One of the significant things was we had the Garza case. I think this Mexican was shot at in a telephone booth. I can't remember the incident. We also had a public hearing on that.

Chall: I think that one may have created some of the picketing.

Fujii: Oh, maybe that was it. I remember, too, I wanted to have a study on rape. The men said, "What do you mean!? Rape?! Who wants to know?" [Laughter] "You don't have to have a study on rape. There's no problem with rape in Hayward." I said, "Maybe that's what you think. But these poor women who've been attacked are afraid to report it." They said, "Well, it serves them right. It serves them right." My gosh, you know, it's just the way you read about it in the papers, it's just incredible. But I'm glad now it's come into the open.

Chall: You were giving the early warning, there. You brought the subject up.

Fujii: It wasn't my own idea. I read it somewhere.

Chall: Yes, but still you had the courage to bring it to the commission.

Fujii: Oh, yes.

Chall: And get turned down.

Fujii: It's all right. I thought I would introduce it anyway. There's no harm in that, I thought. It's good to know the reactions of people because then you realize, my gosh, this is the way the whole country thinks. It's unfortunate; but I'm glad that now we're trying to help these women, these rape victims.

Chall: Yes. There's quite a bit of publicity now and work being done in it.

Fujii: I left the commission before we were getting all this government subsidy for programs. However, I know we tried to get involved in the youth employment opportunity program. The commission itself didn't play a big role, but we had our executive do that -- Harold Moore.

The staff up there has increased. I'm glad that with the help of the mayor's [Ilene Weinreb] office...much has been accomplished.

Chall: Yes, she's been quite supportive of this kind of thing, hasn't she?

Fujii: Oh, yes.

Chall: Has there been a difference in interest and support for programs like this since we have the new city manager? From Ray Doran to...?

Fujii: Hanley. Bill Hanley. I think that a lot of this was stopped at Bea Smith's desk, and it didn't get to the city manager. Is she around any more?

Chall: I don't know.

Fujii: I know she hasn't been well, and I don't even know if we still have an assistant city manager or not. We must have.

I have no idea. But I know that Ilene has brought the changes around. The city managers are always so money conscious and should be. Anything that's going to cost a little bit, or that would require hiring more people, they just kind of hold back. I don't know how Bill Hanley's doing. He's been pretty good, though. Certainly better than Ray Doran. Ray Doran worked hard; he loved the city of Hayward but I think he was blindfolded. He closed his eyes to a lot of things, social issues.

Hayward Public Service Commission

Chall: Were you appointed to another Hayward commission -- personnel or public works?

Fujii: Public service.

Chall: Public service. What was that?

Fujii: [Laughs] That's a good question. We do concern ourselves with sewerage and water, and rates.

Chall: Oh, certainly.

Fujii: And streets.

Chall: That's a different position for a woman to be in. Are you the only woman on the commission?

Fujii: No. Audrey Le Pell is on the commission. I don't think I'm the first woman on that commission.

Chall: Who appointed you?

Fujii: I think it was just a matter of...The city of Hayward, until a couple of years ago, seemed to keep the same commissioners you know. And shift them from one commission to another. I think that's what happened to me.

Chall: I see.

Fujii: And I was asked if I'd like to serve on the Personnel Commission or

Fujii: the Public Service Commission. Inasmuch as I worked on the sewer study committee of many, many years ago, I thought, well, why don't I just try the Public Service Commission? There were some bright members on the commission at that time and I learned a lot from them.

Right now, of course we're concerned with water, with bike paths; and whenever a new development comes in, we're asked to look at the street pattern, and whether we want to pass our approval or not. It doesn't necessarily mean that just because we approve or disapprove, that it's going to influence the city council. They've already got their preconceived notions. But we go through the motions.

Chall: Is it a frustrating job, then? Do you find all you are is a sort of shield between the public and the city council? Or can you really effect some policy?

Fujii: I know that before I became a member of the commission, I was talking to one of the members and he said, "You know, the city council has been asking us just to rubber stamp everything, so we decided we're not going to let this happen. So, we study every report that comes out and we make a report back." We've been doing this. I think we do make an impression. Enough certainly to make the city explain their position when they vote against our recommendations.

Then we did have a public hearing, I remember, when I came on the commission, on raising cable TV rates. That was a very interesting study, too. Apparently this TV company was supposed to promise the city of Hayward that they would make cable TV accessible to everybody. That included the people up on the hill. There aren't any cable lines going up there. They're very unhappy. But those are wealthy people up there; they can get their own strong TV sets, receivers, or whatever you call them. Raising sewer rates and water rates--that's such a terrible decision for us to make. Of course, the city tells us we have to raise the rates because of costs.

[end tape 4, side 1; begin tape 4, side 2]

Fujii: I think we've had to raise the rates about four times since I've been there.

Chall: And how long is that? How long have you been on the commission?

Fujii: About four years. 1973.

Chall: I see. As soon as you went off the human relations commission.

Fujii: Yes.

Chall: So you've had to raise the rates, what, about once a year?

Fujii: It's terrible. And then the paper will come out with the public services commission recommends....

Chall: I see. It's your fault. Well, that's the shield.

Fujii: I don't like that.

Chall: Do people call you?

Fujii: I haven't had any calls, but I think Audrey and I especially, are socially concerned, especially about these older people who really can't afford to pay any more for water and sewage. I think that in each instance, we've approved -- but. We felt there should be some consideration for them.

Chall: Are steps being taken now?

Fujii: The city council says they can't do it because if they make any exceptions, if they move toward favoring certain people, then they can't get federal aid. At least that's what we were told. But anyway, we put in our arguments.

Chall: You expressed yourself. [Laughter] You said that in these commissions, there's no sex discrimination. You're one other voice on the commission. People treat each other equally.

Fujii: Yes. I've served on the human relations commission, and public service commission. There hasn't been any discrimination there, sexually.

Alameda County Commission for Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency,
1967-1975

Chall: What about the delinquency, The Alameda County Commission for Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency. You went onto that commission in 1966, I think. How long were you on that?

Fujii: I thought it was '67.

Chall: That's all right. It's whenever you say.

Fujii: Until around '75, I believe.

Chall: That's another long time.

Fujii: Yes. That was too long. I don't think anyone should serve on a

Fujii: commission more than about six years. I know I've served on the human relations commission for ten years. Really, there should be new blood. I don't think anyone should stay long with any commission.

Chall: Who appointed you to the juvenile delinquency commission?

Fujii: Judge Purchio [John J.].

Chall: What was the function of that commission? Its purpose?

Fujii: The purpose of the commission? Let's see, we were a committee at the time. We were certainly concerned with creating ways to prevent juvenile delinquency. We tried to avoid the curing aspects that were mentioned. We had members of the school board on the commission and we tried to work towards a county-wide program for delinquency prevention. We weren't that active as a committee.

We didn't get in the needs of the cities so much, but we made different studies to see what was offered in each of the cities. We wanted to know if there were youth groups; youth centers, youth employment programs; care, foster care homes. We were quite involved with foster care homes. And we were interested in Snedigar Cottage. We saw the juvenile home up there [upper hills of southern Alameda County]. Of course, that's already trying to cure, but we were hoping they will not become criminals. The judge always met with us.

Especially at ~~that~~ time, I think the drug abuse program was determined. There wasn't a good program. We were all aware of the drug abuse-- but how to approach it, how to help the young kids get off the habit? We worked closely with the probation department. They had a member from their staff who was our executive. So we were always aware of what programs they were getting involved in. There never seemed to be enough people working for them to help all these kids.

Chall: This was a whole new field for you, wasn't it?

Fujii: I was asked to serve on this just because I was a lay person. I told them I certainly don't have any background for this. They said, "Well, we want someone just in the community because those of us who are on the committee right now are professionals. Either teachers, or people involved with the probation department, or recreation leaders."

Chall: They needed some other ideas from inside the community.

Fujii: There was someone representing labor. He was an active Boy Scouter. Another man who was an executive of Safeway. I guess we were the

Fujii: only people not really directly involved in juvenile care.

Chall: Did you ever feel that you could provide some other point of view as a lay person?

Fujii: Well, you know what I think? My role was that I got information from there and I spread it around here.

Chall: That's interesting.

Fujii: At that time, Project Eden was just developing. [Drug abuse program in southern Alameda County] Then I also brought information back to the Human Relations Commission. There was information feeding back and forth.

Chall: You were the liaison in the community.

Fujii: Well, within the committees that I served. It was just feedback.

Chall: That's a function, too, I guess.

Fujii: I think it is. And I think that's why I was asked to serve on that commission. Also, parents of children who were sent to juvenile hall, because they were involved in drugs, would become so unhappy --not only unhappy but scared. They didn't know what to do. So in several instances, I said just go talk to the probation officer; you'll find him the friendliest person. If he knows that you're interested, he'll help you more because the biggest problem he has is that parents don't give a darn. I think I've been able to help in that respect. In fact, even in my own family. I hope I was able to do something. I don't think I was able to contribute too much myself.

Chall: That may not be what they were looking for. Maybe it was your ability to be a source of information to key people in the community.

Fujii: Then I would tell them what we were doing here in Hayward. Youth opportunities, employment, and so forth. I learned a lot from this commission.

Chall: I would imagine so.

Fujii: For a while, it began to die down and then we got a new chairman who was very good.

Chall: Who was that?

Fujii: He became a judge recently. Gosh, what's his name? He worked for Senator Petris.

Chall: Rod [Roderic] Duncan?

Fujii: Rod Duncan. He was a very good chairman. He really pulled the commission together. Was very dedicated and personally involved. He got the other members involved in studies and programs. Then another was this girl who'd become chairman, too. She interviews people on TV, and she also ran for city council [Oakland].

Chall: Betty Ann Bruno?

Fujii: Yes, Betty Ann Bruno. She is really talented; a smart gal. She and Rod really ran that commission. It became a commission, later, you see.

Chall: But it was a committee at the time?

Fujii: Yes. The only big thing about becoming a commission is they paid for our lunches. Before that, we paid for our own. Big deal. [Laughs]

Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District, 1972-1977

Chall: Then you went on to the AC Transit board. When did you go on AC transit?

Fujii: I've only been on it for five years. [April, 1972] The first year and a half -- my first two years -- I served out the term of Guy Warren; E. Guy Warren. I was appointed by the board.

Chall: That's right, Warren died, didn't he? I forgot that.

Fujii: Yes. And I became the first woman member.

Chall: The first woman member. How do you think the board happened to pick you? They were looking for a Hayward area person, I suppose, to replace Guy Warren.

Fujii: Yes, they were. I was notified through the grapevine that there was a position open and they'd rather have a woman. So Pat Nisbet [chair, women's division, northern California] called me and said, "Kimi, you should try for this."

Chall: I see.

Fujii: Someone approached her, obviously a Democrat, asking if there were some women out here who might qualify for the job. I wasn't that

- Fujii: qualified. I just didn't have any transportation background, but I thought, well, I'll try.
- Chall: That's a wholly different kind of board, isn't it? This is a business board.
- Fujii: Yes. And fortunately, I knew a few members of the board. I didn't know that they were on the board at the time. I knew Ray Rinehart through the Democratic party. Jack McDonnell. I knew him through the garden show. Letters were written in my behalf by March Fong Eu, and Carlos Bee who were both serving in the State Assembly, and Senator Holmdahl. Nick Petris also was helpful.
- Chall: It's a five person board?
- Fujii: No, it's seven.
- Chall: Seven. How did it feel, and what have you been able to do? You served as president too.
- Fujii: Two years. I served as vice-president for two years. I think the men treated me just like another member. I didn't receive any special treatment. I didn't have any competition for that position, that I know of. I just called up each person and asked if I could have an interview. Such gall, but anyway....
- Chall: Oh, did you really? You really applied for the position, then.
- Fujii: [Laughs] But I also had some mail from legislators. I think March Fong was contacted. Someone asked her if she would recommend me. She sent letters to all the directors. Carlos Bee was a bit indignant because she had sent her letters before I had asked him [laughs], but it didn't occur to me to ask anybody. I didn't know how to proceed. I said, "Well, if you would too, I would appreciate it." So he said, "Of course, I would do it." Then I guess Senators Holmdahl and Petris recommended me to each of the board members. I met with each of the board members separately. At one time, I saw two of them I guess. I wasn't afraid at all. I just asked if I could talk to them.
- Chall: You've grown up a lot. [Laughter] You've come a long way.
- Fujii: One man came to see me. He did some background work on me. Investigated me. He went down to the Chamber of Commerce. [Laughter] Fortunately, I was a friend of his son-in-law, Arnold Biella. And Arnold and I were good friends.
- Chall: It's a small world when you really get right down to it, isn't it?

Fujii: In fact, I had a kaffeeklatsch for Arnold when he ran for the school board [Hayward]. So, I guess he didn't forget that either. I certainly had. I didn't know that there was any connection between the two, really.

Chall: No, I didn't realize that Arnold had those connections here.

Fujii: I was told that he'd be a difficult man, but he wasn't difficult at all.

Chall: That was Arnold's father-in-law? What was his name -- Robert Copeland?

Fujii: Yes. He is a dear man, after all.

Chall: After they all approved of you and you went on the board, what did you find the work to be like?

Fujii: It took me about six months to get the hang of it. We had two board meetings a month plus committee meetings. Everybody goes to all the committee meetings, whether they're members of the committee or not. I didn't know that. There were some non-committee members attending the meetings of our committee and I finally asked, "Does everybody go to all the meetings?" "Oh, yes, don't you know that?" Oh, God, no, I didn't know. I also didn't know you could park for free. Nobody told me and I thought that was discrimination. [Laughter] I finally found out.

I did learn about AC transit and its operation through study. It took me one night a week to catch up, and just to keep current, and to learn the history of the AC transit system. We were always concerned about money, and needed money.

At that time, we weren't so involved in social issues, like now. Gradually, as the years went by, in only a period of five years, we made special concessions to senior citizens. And then the handicapped people wanted special consideration; they wanted lifts. It's a matter of educating them too, to our problems. They are educating us constantly; but we have problems, too, especially money problems. I hope we can resolve their problems soon. They certainly deserve to get on the bus everytime they want to get on one.

Then, the union problems. We had the strike for two months in 1974. It was a terrible thing to go through because that was the year I was running for election. July and August was when they had the strike and people would call me up. I really was getting calls from people, wanting to know when the strike was going to end, and I said, "I wish it would end now." "Well, why don't you give in?" Other people called and said, "Don't give in to the strikers." We

Fujii: got a mediator in from the state.

It was quite a strain. All that was going on during the election, and my first election, too. I didn't know whether I wanted to run. I was terrified that I'd have to make a few campaign speeches, but I got through, with a lot of help, thank goodness.

Chall: Yes, you had quite a bit of support from the community in that election, it seems to me.

Fujii: I had one woman running against me. That was Gerri Bigelow. If she hadn't run against me I wouldn't have had to campaign so hard.

Chall: Did you campaign pretty hard? She wasn't as well known as you, but she was able to get around.

Fujii: Well, she was a white American, for one thing; she was young, had lots of energy and was an attractive blond.

Chall: Yes, she had all that going for her.

Fujii: The NWPC supported me. I think it's partly because [laughs] I was a member of the organization. She was originally, poor thing -- a Playboy Club employee. I don't think anyone should hold it against her, but she told us she was a Bunny Girl. That's not a very popular thing to do.

Chall: I see. Not with the National Women's Political Caucus, I guess. The women's liberation movement doesn't take too kindly to that sort of activity. [Laughter] You got through that all right -- that election. But was that something that you ever considered during all these years of political activity, and working for others? Were you more or less ready to campaign on your own do you think?

Fujii: I guess. I never thought I'd be running for anything. I like to help people but I don't particularly care to run. Of course, I'm going to be getting married and leaving the area, but I certainly have no aspirations, and would have none. I think this will be the end of my political activity.

Coping with the Strike

Chall: Tell me a little bit more about the strike in terms of what it's like to be on the board when this kind of problem arises. It is a struggle, isn't it? You tend to have to see both sides of it. Did you find that the men were more concerned about the business end of

FRANCIS DUNN

30528 Hoylake Street, Hayward, California

November 11 1974

Miss Kimi Fujii
24949 Soto Road
Hayward.Ca.

Dear Kimi;
This is not a Victory Lei of the beauty and proportions you gave to me on my first election to the Board of Supervisors in 1954. However I do want you to know how extremely happy Toni and I are at your well deserved victory at the Polls last Tuesday.

We know what a conscientious and sincere ,as well as hard working job you have done in your many prior public services. We are sure you will continue to give your very best efforts in your future term as an A.C.Transit Director. One of the toughest of all political offices I can think of, now or for the future.

It is the people of the District who are to be congratulated in selecting you. But please accept our prayers and best wishes for a rewarding and successful term in office.

Sincerely,



Francis and Toni Dunn

p.s I write worse than I type
Frank

Chall: it as employers? Or can they see the union's point of view? How do you balance it?

Fujii: You are, after all, a member of the board and your job there is to see that the AC transit is functioning, and within certain fiscal limits. That's your job. Even if you are sympathetic to some of the union's demands -- what comes first? It's too bad. You have to compromise.

Even Mr. Roy Nakadagawa who is vice-chairman now, is quite liberal, and very, very pro-union, was voting with the board. I was pleased to see this because I'm sure that he may have had a few moments of doubt in his mind. But you know, you look over the balance sheets and you don't know where the money's going to come from to pay higher wages. He decided that he just couldn't go along with it.

We had a mediator come in, of course, and he couldn't solve it. He just couldn't get union negotiators together. The leadership was weak and it was hard for them. The union itself didn't have good leadership. We didn't even know who we should be negotiating with. We weren't involved directly -- the directors were not. We had our own negotiating team under the personnel manager and one of his staff, I think it was. They would sit at the union table every day until the early hours of the morning. Of course, we always had to be within reach of our general manager. I couldn't go anywhere. If I wanted to go up to Mendocino where I like to go in the summer, I had to let them know where I was going to be.

Chall: In case something developed?

Fujii: Yes. We might have to come right back and have another vote. At one time, we thought after one month's strike it was going to be settled. I started making plans [laughs] and then thought I'd better stay home, because things got so terribly critical. It's really a strain on everybody.

Chall: That's true. Two months -- a long time.

Fujii: And nobody comes to work except the non-union employees, so there's a backlog of work in the offices. It's really very, very hard. Then the poor people whose husbands are out on the bus strike, their wives, their families are suffering, too. Everybody suffers when there's a strike. I just felt so badly.

I used to go over to Liberty House in Oakland upstairs and have coffee. The waitress there would say, "Oh, I wish this strike would end. These poor little ladies from Alameda. They used to come once a week and have their lunch here, and we'd have a chat."

Fujii: Gosh, my heart's bleeding. What can you do when people can't come in to see their physicians and students can't go to school? One student wrote to us and said that he missed out on his college degree because he couldn't get to college. You feel so conscience stricken, but what can you do? It just affects everybody.

Chall: Is there any solution for public service personnel and strikes? Is there any way to prevent it, do you think?

Fujii: I think after our long strike, I was told there was going to be a bill passed, certainly introduced in the assembly, that would prohibit public employees from striking. I don't know what's ever happened to that. I know at that time it was introduced. Bill Lockyer told me about it. Of course, I guess it wouldn't pass, anyway.

Responsibilities as Board President

Chall: I wonder even if it passed, how effective it would be. You could put the leaders into prison, I suppose, or fine them. It makes it very hard.

When you were president, dealing more directly, I guess, with the management than you would have as a board member, how did you find that relationship?

Fujii: The manager's a fine and tremendously qualified person. Period. [Laughs] No, I shouldn't say that. He is a very fine person, but I think it took him awhile to get used to the idea that there was a woman sitting there. It's amusing. It took him a long time to say Madam President or President Fujii. It would be Chairman Fujii, and it's supposed to be president. In fact, the whole staff, had difficulty calling me president. I notice now, with the new president, it's always President McDonnell. [Laughter] They were having a hard time. But they did treat me with respect, I would say. I was known to be very inquisitive. I think it disturbed them a little bit especially our general manager. *

Chall: You asked more questions than board members usually do?

Fujii: Yes. [Laughs] After all, what am I there for? I had to know more things. I worked very hard. It was a very intense two years. I was exhausted. I think every president does. Such a responsibility.

* At the time of the interview Alan Bingham was the general manager. He died suddenly of a heart attack in January, 1978.

She's AC Transit's Big Wheel

By ELAINE REED
Tribune Staff Writer

If Kimiko "Kimi", Fujii had her way, more people would leave their cars at home and ride the bus. You see, "Kimi" is the new president of the AC Transit Board and the first woman in its 19-year history to serve in that capacity.

Elected by fellow board members, she is well qualified for the post, having served as vice president of the transit board for two years.

"I've always been interested in transportation," said Miss Fujii (she prefers Miss to Ms.) during an interview at Fujii Florist, a 53-year-old family business in Hayward. But her interest is heightened in view of the gas shortage plus environmental issues.

She was appointed to the seven-member board in April, 1971, to fill out the unexpired term of the late E. Guy Warren. And just last November, she was elected (she won by a wide margin) to a four-year term. She represents voters in Ward Five, which takes in Hayward, Castro Valley, San Lorenzo and a little strip of San Leandro.

Miss Fujii has no doubt that the public is more transit-oriented these days, but she still thinks there's a need to get more people riding buses. "Some people," she noted, "are in their middle 40's and don't even know how to ride a bus." And the best way to teach them, she figures, is through a vigorous marketing campaign. "We have to send some of our public relations employees out to organizations, factories and schools and just show people how easy it is to use the bus."

Miss Fujii figures the more people who use the bus, the better off the debt-riddled transit system will be. "There is a definite need for more money," she noted, "and we don't want to raise fares.

Because, you see, mass transit, philosophically speaking, is for people who don't have any means of transportation."

As president of the policy-making board, which works closely with the AC Transit District staff, she wants to see all of the programs started last year continued. She also wants to see bus lines within the city studied more carefully so they can be more useful to the public. She's going to be pushing for more shopper buses, now in operation in Oakland and Hayward, put into use during off-peak hours. And she would like to see the district purchase buses with wide doors and aisles so they could be of service to the handicapped. "It's very important for anyone who's confined or with limited mobility to be able to get out and be a part of the mainstream," she emphasized.

Miss Fujii would like the public to know that she is deeply interested in people's transit-related problems. "There's nothing worse than having city government or any kind of government where the people are not involved," she said. "I feel very strongly about being available to people. I've had people call me here" and I'm glad they do. It's surprising how people don't know where to go with a problem."

Working on people-problems is nothing new to Miss Fujii, who's been involved in community problems in her home town of Hayward since 1947.

In 1942, her Japanese-American family was sent to a relocation camp in Topaz, Utah. Miss Fujii studied for a year at Brigham Young University and then transferred to the University of Wisconsin, majoring in botany and minoring in art history. Friends had kept the family business going during the war years and after the war her family returned and picked up the

July 2006

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Tribune photo by HOWARD ERKER

Kimiko 'Kimi' Fujii, who's devoted a good part of her life to community affairs, is in the driver's seat as head of AC Transit Board

pieces.

Miss Fujii returned from college in 1947 and began working in the family business as well as working on housing problems in Hayward. At that time, she recalled, Japanese-Americans were returning from the relocation camps and having trouble finding housing. People didn't want to sell or rent to them.

Working on people-problems came naturally because, she said, "my father was active in the Japanese-American community and I was brought up to think about the welfare of people and the community." Her experiences during the war years helped to reinforce her beliefs.

She has served on the Human Relations Commission in Hayward. In addition she worked on a mental health study group which led to a post with the Alameda County Commission for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency. In 1964, she served as president of the California Spring Garden Show.

For her far-flung community involvement, Miss Fujii was named Hayward's Distinguished Citizen of 1972 by the Hayward Lions Club.

The first woman to serve on the AC Transit Board is unduly modest about her accomplishments. She knew she was being considered for the presidency, however, she said, "I was just a bit overwhelmed."

Incidentally, Miss Fujii does not ride an AC bus to work even though the bus runs in front of her house. She walks to work.

The Daily Review Hayward, Calif. C
Tuesday, October 22, 1974

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Chall: Did you, as a woman, feel that you had to work just a little extra hard to be absolutely sure that you were going to be operating correctly, doing the right thing in handling the meetings, and asking the right questions?

Fujii: No, I was never conscious myself, being a director and a woman, that I was playing a role.

Chall: You didn't feel you were on the spot?

Fujii: No. It was just the relationship, I think, that I had with the general manager; he was just not used to the idea of having a woman around. I don't think he resented it, but he just wasn't used to the idea. After all, [laughs] to say that our board of directors has a woman president was a little hard for him to get accustomed to. But he respected me. We had some fine meetings together. It took me awhile to get used to the idea, too, to be president of a big organization. It wasn't because I'm a woman; it has a huge budget, and gosh, it was really overwhelming.

Chall: What responsibilities does the president have, over and above presiding at meetings? Is there more responsibility than there is for a regular board member, for example?

Fujii: You're expected to appear at public functions, for one. That's time consuming. Then our district did enlarge quite a bit during the time that I was president. We got Fremont and Newark into the AC Transit District at that time. Then our contract service was extended way into Contra Costa County and toward Livermore, and so forth. So, I was expected to appear at some of those first-day ceremonies.

Chall: Oh, I see. Ribbon cutting.

Fujii: Ribbon cutting. And I represented the board on the Metropolitan Transportation Commission. What they were trying to do was to form another committee of just presidents of the transit districts in the Bay Area: San Jose, San Mateo, San Francisco, Marin, Oakland. We only had two meetings. That Metropolitan Transportation Commission is trying to bring the big umbrella over all the transit districts. Sometimes I wonder if eventually they will all be tied in together.

[end tape 4, side 2; begin tape 5, side 1]

Chall: We were talking about your work on the transit system. The ceremonial work, and then working with the manager. Who plans the agendas for the meetings?

Fujii: The general manager and the district secretary. I talked to the

Fujii: district secretary very often; the general manager also, but more to the district secretary. He's the one who gets the agenda out, and he gets the committee meeting notices out, and so forth. He plans the meeting dates. I go over some of the agendas with him. Not all of them, because generally he works them up with the general manager. The general manager works up the agenda for each of the committees and the board meetings. Of course I have to preside at the meetings, obviously. I try to keep up, to keep ahead as much as possible, and to make sure that we're discussing at each of the committee meetings, these items that we've discussed at our board meetings and any new items. We have a terrifically capable and dedicated staff there. However, our board is actually a policy-making board. We're not involved in management; we're not supposed to be.

Chall: They do stay clear of it then?

Fujii: You've got to have the general manager over all. That's why you hire a good one. Mr. Bingham's a really great manager. He's one of the tops in the country. As a matter of fact, AC transit is one of the top transit districts in the country. I'm proud of my association with it. I think each of the board members is, too.

Our policy is that at each of our board meetings, all the managers will appear -- like maintenance manager, transportation manager, and so forth. So we're in constant touch with each other and they work up studies for us as we need them. I think, on the whole, it's been really a great experience on that board. We have a very conservative man. We have people who are in between; then me, of course. Then a liberal, a very real liberal, Mr. Nakadagawa.

Chall: He's Japanese-American.

Fujii: Yes. He ran for the board. He ran against an appointed incumbent.

Chall: That's pretty rare.

Fujii: Yes. And when he ran again, he didn't have any opposition. At any rate, I think that we have a good cross section of people on the board. We're concerned about the environment; we're concerned about viable transportation, of course, available to everybody, of all means -- the handicapped, the elderly, trying to interface with BART [Bay Area Rapid Transit District] at every opportunity; keeping the fares down; getting as much government subsidy as possible.

Our staff works on that, you see. They know that we're aware and we're aware that they know. That operation is just tops. I'm so amazed and the experience I've had there, I would hate to see it go to waste. I hope that sometime there might be an opportunity to serve on another district sometime, but not just yet. [Laughter]

Two on AC Transit Board to Quit Posts

The first black member and the first woman member of the AC Transit board of directors will be resigning within a few months of each other—but for widely different reasons—it was revealed yesterday.

Chester C. McGuire Jr., who was elected to the board in 1974, will leave Sunday for Washington, D.C., to serve as assistant secretary for fair housing and equal opportunity in the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). His appointment to the \$50,000 a year post, which requires Senate approval, was announced Tuesday by HUD Secretary Patricia Harris.

And Kimiko (Kimi) Fujii, who has served as president of the board for the past two years, will marry Ray Kitayama, a wholesale florist and nurseryman, this summer and will resign to make her home in Brighton, Colo., where Mr. Kitayama has long been active in civic affairs.

Thus the board, for the first time in its history, will be making two appointments almost simultaneously. The board has 60 days after the resignations take effect to appoint new directors-at-large.

Mr. McGuire will be administering the fair housing laws and advising Ms. Harris on all matters pertinent to the expansion of housing opportunities for low income and minority people in the United States.

"I want to make sure existing programs work as well and as equitably as possible and to provide the kind of input to make this type of legislation work better than it has in the past," Mr. McGuire

said yesterday.

He declined to be more specific on what measures he would recommend pending his Senate confirmation hearing.

Mr. McGuire, 40, has been serving as vice president of the Berkeley Planning Association, a consulting firm, and as a lecturer at the University of California in the department of city and regional planning.

He is married and the father of three children attending Berkeley schools. His wife, Susan, a nurse in the Oakland public school system, and family will move to Washington this summer.

Miss Fujii has been prominent in the wholesale and retail florist business in Hayward. She was first appointed

to the board in 1972 and returned by the voters in 1974, defeating three challengers.

She was named Hayward's distinguished citizen of 1972 by the Hayward Lions Club and serves as chairman of the Hayward Public Service Commission.

She was a member of the Alameda County Commission for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency and a past president of the Hayward Human Relations Commission. For the past 11 years, she has been a member of the District Agricultural Association, the board that produces the California Spring Garden Show.

The marriage will be her first. Her fiancé is a widower with four grown children. His brother is Union City Mayor Tom Kitayama.

Chall: Denver may be needing it very soon.

Fujii: I don't think so. We'll see.

Chall: Yes, I'm sure that's an experience that shouldn't go to waste. It's rather rare. Did you mind the social aspect--going out to ribbon cutting and all that?

Fujii: It's just too time consuming because I have a job, too. I had to make special concessions in order to get away. It was difficult for me in that respect. It's hard enough to get to the board meetings.

Chall: Yes. And all the committee meetings. And they all met during the day?

Fujii: Yes.

Chall: So these men can get away?

Fujii: Yes.

Chall: Are they mostly businessmen?

Fujii: Who serve on the board?

Chall: Yes.

Fujii: Roy Nakadagawa works for the city of Richmond as a city engineer. We have one college professor - Chet [Chester C.] McGuire, who was just appointed by President Carter to a position in Washington, D.C. We have two nursery people, me and Mr. McDonnell, and one public relations man. [William Bettencourt] One's a financier [William Berk, one's a CPA, he's been invaluable--Ray Rinehart.

One of our big concerns on the board is a pension plan for the employees, funding that. Of course, it's adequate, but that's been my worry. To make sure it's adequately funded. Just to see that we're operating within the available money we would get. We are supported by the counties too--by the taxpayers. We get a lot from the Department of Transportation.

Thoughts on Financing Transportation Systems

Chall: Do you think that a transportation system like this could ever be self supporting? It must depend on some kind of subsidy? How much?

- Fujii: Eventually, not because I think socialistically, but I think transportation's going to have to be like the fire and police protection, free.
- Chall: Yes.
- Fujii: It's got to. It's the only way, and it's the only way to get people out of their cars, too. All this pollution in the air. It's terrible. I don't know if we'll ever get to that, but we might.
- Chall: Every now and then, someone raises this question about the possibility that if it's free, people would use it. That's considered the solution. How about the other members of the board and the staff? Do they ever consider this seriously?
- Fujii: The staff hasn't thought about it that seriously because they're concerned with everyday problems. But the board members -- philosophically, maybe half the board members would be inclined toward that. The others would not. They just don't feel the people should have everything free, because you don't appreciate it. But they don't realize that you do get free fire protection and free police protection. Of course they are tax subsidized.
- Chall: Our highways are more or less free. We take advantage of it. That's a different way of looking at it.

California Spring Garden Show, 1960-1971

- Chall: What can you tell me about the California Spring Garden Show? Your eleven years on that board? Was that hard work or a combination of fun and work?
- Fujii: It was a combination of fun and work. That, again, was my first exposure to working for the state, because it was also funded by the state at that time. I don't know whether they get money from the state now to operate, but it was the First District Agricultural Association. We used to get race track money from the state.
- At the time I went on the board there were mostly Republicans because they were Governor Knight's appointees. I was a Governor Brown [Edmund G. Brown, Sr.] appointee. The rest of them were all Republicans, I guess.
- Chall: Some of them might have been appointed by Governor Warren. How long were your terms?



Members of the First District Agricultural Association in the office of Governor Edmund G. Brown, Sr., 1961.



Opening night at the Spring Home and Garden Show. Assemblyman Byron Rumford, Elsie Rumford, board-members Mrs. Burton Robinson, Kimi Fujii. Oakland, California, 1967.

Fujii: Four years.

Chall: When were you appointed?

Fujii: I was appointed, however, for a two year term first. Let's see, 1960.

Chall: That's soon after Governor Brown was elected.

Fujii: Yes. Carlos called me one day and asked if I'd be interested. I was. He was notified, I guess, that there was an opening out here. I said, "Sure, I'll try."

Chall: The others were all men?

Fujii: No, there was one other woman. Florence Robinson. I remember her making a remark when I went to my first meeting. She said, "Until now, I was the only woman on this board." I thought, "So what?" [Laughter] We had a good relationship.

Chall: Did she stay on all these same years?

Fujii: Yes. Governor Brown appointed her every time. However, I got a notice from Ronald Reagan thanking me for my service.

Chall: That's right. 1971. That's when your term ran out?

Fujii: Yes. He didn't choose to reappoint me, which was all right. I had served already too long. I enjoyed this. It was a good experience. Then, again, it's a microcosm of what goes on, on the state level. We were always -- confronted with red tape. My God, it was terrible.

But it just gives you an idea of what goes on at the state level and probably on the national level. Getting funds, again. Whatever we did, we had to get approval from the Department of Agriculture in Sacramento.

Chall: These were to put on the garden shows that used to be held in the Oakland Auditorium? All the planning you had to do had to be approved?

Fujii: By the Department of Agriculture.

Chall: Waterfalls? Trees?

Fujii: The complete design plus costs. Well, we approved the design, but then it had to be sent up to Sacramento. We would approve it. It generally was approved, when it came back. But all expenditures had to be approved. Oh goodness. We had to wait and wait sometimes;

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA • • • JOHN H. READING, Mayor

September 14, 1967

GREETINGS!

This letter will serve to introduce Miss Kimi Fujii who is visiting Western Europe on a horticultural fact-finding tour.

Miss Fujii is a respected citizen of our community and is an active participant in civic affairs. She is a past president of Oakland's internationally acclaimed annual California Spring Garden Show, and is currently a member of its Board of Directors.

It would be most helpful if your local authorities would assist Miss Fujii in her quest to improve Oakland's floral event.

Through Miss Fujii, I extend cordial greetings to you and the citizens of your City.

Any courtesies or hospitality extended to Miss Fujii during her stay in your City would be greatly appreciated by me.

Sincerely,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "John H. Reading".

John H. Reading
MAYOR



- Fujii: and send a delegation up there to talk to the governor, or to try to see the man who's in charge of expositions and fairs.
- Chall: I didn't realize. . . .
- Fujii: Oh, it's so pesty, really.
- Chall: They come out so beautifully.
- Fujii: It was all controlled up there. But I enjoyed my experience. There was a lot of la-dee-dah about it, I guess, when you think about it.
- Chall: Explain that. [Laughs]
- Fujii: Opening night, you know. And the dinner that went with it.
- Chall: It's a social night, isn't it, for some of the socialites of the area.
- Fujii: It's supposed to be a fundraiser for some of the Children's Hospital groups. It was quite lah-dee-dah, as I said. We would invite the legislators' wives down for a luncheon one day. Then we'd have different garden clubs in the area come in and we'd have something for them. All in all, it was a big social event.
- Chall: You must have been quite busy then, during those two weeks or so when the show was on, if you had to be present at these various affairs.
- Fujii: We didn't have to go to all of them, and we didn't have to go every day to the show, either, because we had a general manager come in.
- Chall: They're terribly creative. I think they've just been beautiful. Even with the changes that have been made over the years in the different locations, they still have retained a certain beauty.
- Fujii: Yes, they've had to cut back quite a bit. We had quite a surplus in the bank, of course, with the intention of buying the site, a permanent site. Then the state decided -- fairs and expositions decided -- you really shouldn't have a surplus, you should spend that money. So they made us spend it. They would decrease our allotment and so, finally, we were down to nothing. [Laughs] It's terrible. You were punished for making money.

St. Rose Hospital Advisory Board, 1968-1977

Chall: And now, St. Rose Advisory Commission. How long have you been on that commission and what does that entail?

Fujii: It's the St. Rose Hospital Advisory Board. From 1968. I was, again, the first woman member ever appointed. It's interesting, isn't it? The members of the board decided they needed a woman. Marsh [Marshall] Hansen called me up and said, "Kimi, we'd like to invite you to become a member of the board." I didn't even know they had an advisory board. So he told me a little bit about it. I thought about it. He called me up again and I decided, well, I'll give it a try, why not. They didn't meet very often [laughs]; so, that's the first thing.

Chall: Did they meet at night?

Fujii: He had breakfast meetings. His committee was having breakfast meetings. I thought I could attend those meetings.

Chall: Was Marsh Hansen president at that time? Of the board?

Fujii: I think he was chairman of the community services committee. They were still quite loosely constructed at that time. The community services committee; what did they do? I don't know what they did, actually.

This is a community hospital, so it's non profit. They are supported by the Sisters of St. Joseph in Wichita, Kansas. I eventually became chairman of the community services committee. The biggest thing, I guess we did was to start the Good Samaritan Award. This was to recognize people in the community who had just done things of Good Samaritan nature. Just helping a fellow man. Many people do these things and go unrecognized. They don't do it however because they want to be recognized and appreciated. At first, we had just a few people whose names were submitted, but now it's become more well known and people have been submitting names. The idea's taken hold.

The advisory board has changed their setup. Now they don't have this committee any more. I think there are about twenty-two members on the board. Their function's different now.

Chall: What is their function in relation to the hospital?

Fujii: Fund raising for one.

Chall: What else is new?

Fujii: And then to get people interested in coming to St. Rose, some people think if they're not Catholic, they shouldn't go there. They'd be willing to go to the emergency, but everyone is welcome in the hospital.

Also, we learn a lot from the hospital, too. The services that they have now, like the alcohol rehabilitation. It's great. And then they have cardiac services.

Chall: The helicopter pad.

Fujii: The helicopter pad, yes. Then they have an extended care facility. This is all since the time I became a member of the board. Now they have a plan which supplements the family doctor's care. In fact, I went there the other day. My doctor wasn't in the office at the time that I had a urinary tract infection. God it was uncomfortable. I went over to St. Rose and they took care of me right away. There were a lot of people like me who just didn't happen to have their doctors available. It's supplemental care. All these services we are learning about as board members. And then we let people know. It's another public service. But we're mostly concerned with money.

Chall: Hospitals are so costly now for patients. There again, something has to be done so the average man can afford health care. The hospitals are in a bind.

Fujii: In fact, they even have a professional fund raiser on the staff now. I was interested in this because my husband-to-be is on the board of the Brighton Community Hospital [Colorado]. It's an elected board there. They have a professional fund-raising group that's come in to help them raise \$500,000.

Chall: They must be planning to expand.

Fujii: I think so. They come in and they set it up for you. I don't know if they guarantee results or not. [Laughter]

Chall: Maybe you should see about this. Otherwise, they'll take everything and leave. You've had some experiences you'll be able to take to any community where you're going to live.

Fujii: I've been very fortunate just being at the right place at the right time. My activities began before the women's movement, and then I was able to ride in on the women's movement. It's been a great happenstance for me.

Chall: I suppose if you hadn't been qualified or capable, they wouldn't have continued to appoint you.

Fujii: I don't know that it's always because you're capable. If you're a person who gets along and you aren't going to make waves -- really, I think that has a lot to do with it.

Chall: On some boards, it's important that members not make waves, although waves are sometimes needed to get things moving.

Fujii: To be really honest with you, that's probably one reason I may have been asked to serve on some of these boards. I'm not really prone to making waves though I'm sure I've caused ripples. You have to be responsible if you do, more so than if you're a quiet person. [Laughter] If you're going to carry this torch you're going to have to carry it all the way through.

Chall: . That's right, you've got to be able to swim to shore. [Laughter] It's all quite interesting.

IV FURTHER THOUGHTS ON THE JAPANESE HERITAGE

The Internment Experience

Chall: Before we come to the end, at least the part that I have outlined here, (you may want to say some things later), I wanted to go back and ask you about some personal matters. Many of the third generation Japanese --

Fujii: Sansei.

Chall: Sansei -- have said that their parents never talked to them about their experiences in internment camps and that they learned about it only when they studied history, and were quite shocked by it. I was wondering whether your brother and sisters have told their children, and why you think that some of the Japanese have not been able to discuss this experience with their children. Would you be able to? Had you ever talked about it with your nieces and nephews; will you be able to discuss it with your stepchildren?

Fujii: Oh, yes.

Chall: It's nothing, then, that you've found unable to talk about?

Fujii: For a long time, I won't say I was unable to talk about it, I just didn't have occasion to talk about it. I am a member of the Japanese-American Citizens League and they send a weekly newspaper out. It's always in your mind and in front of you. I'm sure that if the opportunity should present itself again with my new family, that I would tell them about my experiences, and my feelings, my attitudes. I know my brother has talked to his children about it, and he's kept them aware of it; and my sisters have also.

Chall: That's interesting. I guess there was a source that I read from -- The State University at Fullerton did a major oral history study of Japanese-Americans. I think it was an outgrowth of some classes in history. The students were quite surprised, many of them, about the

Chall: war years. They had never talked about this with their parents, and so this was their way of learning about the whole experience.*

Fujii: I don't know whether parents are so busy just raising children, period, and then going out and earning a living -- whether family units get together and talk about these things. There's a lot of distraction: TV, school activities. You have to just sit down and really spend time with your kids to tell them, at least that's what it seems to me.

Chall: I hadn't really thought of it in that way.

Fujii: I think many people just blocked it out of their minds. It's just been too unpleasant. Some of the younger kids would say -- like my hairdresser, "Oh, gosh, I enjoyed camp." But she was such a little kid, and she had a lot of friends, and went to school; didn't have to worry about eating, or anything. There were always three meals a day.

Chall: It wasn't as upsetting then. Her life hadn't been as upset as the adult lives.

Orientalism in Politics

Chall: I have a quote here from Mr. Alfred Song who wrote an article about Orientalism in politics, about ten years ago, for a book that's now, I think, used as a text.** He says, "While it is an established fact that Orientals born in the United States look only to this country for their political values and allegiances, their personalities appear to reflect a carry over from their ancestral cultures, a reluctance to face the glare of public life." How do you think of that in terms of your own movement through politics in the last couple of decades?

Fujii: Just me?

Chall: Yes. And Orientals in general.

Fujii: I think Orientals in general aren't as reluctant to enter politics.

Chall: They're gradually doing it?

* "Voices Long Silent," An Oral Inquiry into the Japanese American Evacuation. The Japanese American Project of the Oral History Program at Fullerton State University, Fullerton, California, 1974.

** Alfred H. Song, "Politics and Policies of the Oriental Community," California Politics and Policies, Eugene P. Dvorin and Arthur J. Misner, ed., (Addison-Wesley Publishing Co. 1966) pp. 387-411.

Fujii: They are now. For selfish reasons, I think, in some cases.

Chall: What do you mean?

Fujii: Well, what they are doing is like any other person does, I suppose, in agriculture or in business. They'll back a candidate and make him obligated to them.

Chall: There are some running for office, though. Like there are three Orientals now in the legislature: Mr. [Floyd] Mori, Mr. Song, and Paul Bannai.

Fujii: Somebody from Van Nuys. But I don't know that the Japanese necessarily support Japanese. Right now, I know there are certain people in California, who are in agriculture and are getting involved in politics, by becoming more aware of their own legislators. Meeting with them, talking with them, supporting them with money and votes during campaign time, and developing a political awareness that they never had before. I'm glad that they are, whether it's for selfish reasons or not; I'm glad. Maybe their kids will run for office sometime.

In fact, I think there's some man who ran for the assembly from southern California who's a Republican. I don't know how well he did; he didn't win the primary; but I'm glad he ran. It's good experience for him, too.

Chall: So they're learning. The younger generation, then, learning to accept the glare of public life.

Fujii: Yes.

Chall: Times are changing.

Fujii: I think so. They're much more Americanized than we are. I think there's more of an interest, too. It's been quite a struggle for the Nisei, really. It's been hard because they've been raised by Issei parents; many of them like my mother who was raised in practically a feudalistic society. They worked hard, raised families, didn't speak English, socialized among themselves, had little contact with white Americans who were prejudiced against them anyway. It's been hard to learn new ways here, for our parents. Some of them never did learn and then we're adopting the American ways ourselves; and then the kids [Sansei] have it easy.

Chall: That's always the way, I guess. The second generation is the transitional generation. I suppose the internment experience made quite a difference.

[end of tape 5, side 1; begin tape 5, side 2]

Chall: Do you think that the internment did hasten the process of integration?

Fujii: Yes, it did. I think possibly the war, too -- a lot of the Americans going to Japan and marrying Japanese girls. I think that had a lot to do with it, too. Then in California, our population changed. I think the native Californians had a lot to do with getting us interned. With the war we had out-of-staters come into California, working in the factories and so forth, and they stayed. They didn't have these basic prejudices. It's strange, but even now, when I meet a person who says, "I'm a native Californian," I feel uncomfortable -- as if there's an enemy in my presence. Because there was just a lot of prejudice in California before the war, and I can't forgive, I guess, really, for whatever happened to us. You try to be big about it, but it's probably something I'll take to my death with me.

Chall: You're in the generation, really, which Mr. Song says has a reluctance to face the glare of public life, and still you were able to do it.

Fujii: It was a gradual process. Then it became a dedication. I had a goal. Maybe it's a little fighting spirit in me, I guess. I just had to prove myself; prove not just myself but my group -- that we're just as able as anybody else.

Chall: So, much of what you did then was to prove that a Japanese was as good as anyone else, in any of these public service spots.

Fujii: I think that was how I was motivated. I really felt the exposure -- not only for me, but for others to see me there, was very important. Mostly to have others see me there -- that's very important, whether I was effective or not. I tried to be, certainly, but my presence was, to me, an important factor. I honestly believe I have been able to relate to a lot of different people because of my background and my experience over the years and to understand their feelings and problems. I hope I've been of service to my community and people I've worked with. It's been a very special experience for me. Let's hope others who are carrying on will stay with it. Public life is very demanding but it can become a satisfying way of life if one can make the time.

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The Concept of the American "Melting Pot"

- Chall: Now, when you grew up, did you have what was at that time a common idea in the United States, about race -- that this was a melting pot and that we were all going to be integrated and become one great American culture?
- Fujii: No.
- Chall: Your family didn't hold to this theory?
- Fujii: Oh, no -- no. In fact, my parents expected everyone to marry a Japanese in our family and I think all the other Japanese expected that, too. [Laughter]
- Chall: This new expression of ethnicity which has come about recently I think has surprised many people who thought that America was a melting pot and that cultural backgrounds, heritages, were going to melt away.
- Fujii: Yes.
- Chall: And I think many have been surprised that they haven't disappeared and they probably won't.
- Fujii: My nephews are Sansei, but they've experienced prejudice in school. Maybe they've been called a Jap, which they didn't like. You know, they're the next generation. They don't forget these things. They'll probably carry these feelings for a long time, I'm sure.
- Chall: You said something last week about marrying Mr. Ray Kitayama that the two of you shared a common interest in being Japanese. I wondered what you meant by that. What can you bring to your home life and your social life that is Japanese, in the United States? What specially do you feel that the two of you will have together?
- Fujii: Perhaps our backgrounds. Right now, for instance, we will make a few jokes and then we'll throw in a little Japanese, which I couldn't do with anybody else. I mean, a non-Japanese. Or, we have a mutual interest in oriental art. I know anybody else could have an interest, but I feel mine is something I grew up with. Of course, it was not a conscious effort on the part of our parents to instill the cultural aspects of our background into us, but they were there.

I think his children might appreciate my interest. It's just the fact that I said I'd like to have a Japanese garden put into the front and the back of the house, and I have a brother-in-law

- Fujii: who can design it; it can be his wedding gift to us. Of course, he doesn't know it yet, but I think he would go along with it. Ray and his children are very happy about that. There's a racial pride that we have, we both have. I note there are a lot of Japanese there in the Brighton area. We will be mixing, I'm sure with both Japanese and Caucasians. His business, too, would require that.
- Chall: Has he always mixed with both groups, anyhow?
- Fujii: Oh, yes. He's been an active member and is a past president of the chamber [of commerce], he's a member of their Rotary Club. So, there's a lot of mixing. Still, you would like to preserve your own cultural background and interest, too. Then, introduce it to other people, if they're interested. I don't believe in forcing those things on people. But I'm always interested in other people's backgrounds: Spanish, or Mexican, Italian, French, whatever. We may develop more friends who are inclined toward our interests.
- Chall: There's a group of friends there already, I assume.
- Fujii: He's been there ten years, so he and his wife had a large circle of friends.
- Chall: It's interesting what this whole ethnic movement has done to people who have these varying backgrounds. They now feel they can take pride in their background without having to hide it which they might have done a few years before when this interest in one's roots wasn't so common.
- Fujii: What used to disturb me as a younger person -- I guess it was right after World War II began -- I would hear some Nisei say, "I don't speak a word of Japanese. I don't understand it." This used to annoy me because I know most of them had spoken Japanese in the home. Every family spoke Japanese in the home. Why take pride in not speaking Japanese? That's just the way they felt, I guess. Because I certainly am sorry I don't know more Japanese. I wish I could read and write it better.
- Chall: Maybe you could learn more.
- Fujii: I hope to do something.
- Chall: Your next career.
- Fujii: It's going to become a busy life, I guess. I hope I'll have time. I told Ray that I'd like to learn Ikebana. There are some good teachers in Denver, I know. I do flower arranging myself, but it's not the real stuff. My mother has learned the old, old classical

Fujii: style. I've watched what she's done, but she's never taught us. I think that's something I'd like to learn. He thinks it would be a good idea. We'll see what he thinks after. [Laughter]

Chall: After all, you're the new, assertive woman.

Fujii: Well, we'll see what develops.

Chall: It should work out all right.

Fujii: He seems to be quite understanding. His kids seem to be great. I look forward to a good life there.

Chall: That's splendid. Well, on that note we will end this interesting interview.

Transcriber: Marie Herold
Final Typist: Ann Enkoji

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